GRAPHIC INDIA
ISSUE #9
RAMAYAN 3392 AD
DASGUPTA/KANG

SHOUT
SHARE
IT

RAMAYAN 3392 AD

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"ARMAGARH IS A LAND REFLECTING THE SPLENDOR OF HUMAN EXCELLENCE.
"IN AN AGE OF SHADOWS, THE GREAT CITY IS LIKE A SHINING LANCE, TEARING THROUGH THE NOXIOUS CLOUDS THAT COVER OUR WORLD, BRINGING THE LIGHT OF SUN TO OUR REALM.
WE BELONGED TO THE HOUSE OF THE SUN, THE PROUDEST OF ALL THE CLANS OF ARMAGARH. THE FOUR OF US...
"... SHATRU...
"...BHARAT...
"...RAMA...
"... AND ME, LAKSHMAN.
"WE ARE THE SONS OF KING DASHRATH, THE CHIEF COUNCILOR OF ARMAGARH. OUR LIVES WERE PRIVILEGED BEYOND BELIEF.
"THE LUXURIES WE ENJOYED WERE BOUNDLESS. WE WERE TRAINED BY THE BEST OF MEN, TO BECOME THE BEST OF MEN.
"WE ARE SUPER WARRIORS, BORN AND BRED TO BECOME THE FINEST SOLDIERS, SO THAT WE MIGHT PROTECT OUR NATION FROM THE MALIGN FORCES ALIGNED AGAINST IT--THE VILE ASURAS FROM THE DARK CONTINENT OF NARK."

"OUR FATHER LOVED *RAMA* BEST. IT WAS NEVER OVERT, BUT IT WAS EVIDENT FROM THE WAY HE LOOKED AT MY OLDER BROTHER.
"FATHER OFTEN SAID THAT RAMA WAS THE *"ULTIMATE WARRIOR."* THE IDEAL MAN.
"I WONDERED WHY HE FOUND RAMA IDEAL? WHAT WAS SO *SPECIAL* ABOUT HIM? BHARAT WAS ALWAYS THE *STRONGEST,* SHATRU WAS THE *SMARTEST,* AND I...
"...WELL, *I* HAVE IMPECCABLE GOOD LOOKS, OF COURSE.
"I WILL ADMIT THAT I ALWAYS FELT A HINT OF JEALOUSY OVER THE WAY MY FATHER *DOTED* ON RAMA. BUT SOON I CAME TO KNOW THE REASON.
"WE BROTHERS WERE SEPARATED, AND SENT TO OUR RESPECTIVE DUTIES. I WENT WITH RAMA TO *JANASTHAN,* FAR WEST OF ARMAGARH, WHERE WE WERE TO ACT AS GOVERNORS OF THE HUMAN SETTLEMENT THERE.
"THEREAFTER, OUR LIVES CHANGED.
"I STARTED TO SEE MY BROTHER FROM A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE, AS HE LED A SMALL ARMY OF PEASANTS AGAINST THE INVADING *ASURA* FORCES."

"JANASTHAN FOUND ITSELF UNDER ATTACK FROM A MASSIVE ASURA FORCE LED BY THE GENERAL *VIV-SHAN*, WHO WAS TASKED WITH ELIMINATING THE HUMAN PRESENCE IN THAT REGION BY NARK'S DARK LORD, *RAVAN*.
"RAMA FOUGHT RELENTLESSLY AGAINST THE HORDES, DISPLAYING COURAGE UNSEEN BY EVEN THE FIERCEST SUPER WARRIORS.
"SO IT CAME AS A SHOCK WHEN RAMA *SURRENDERED* THE FORT TO VIV-SHAN, EXCHANGING IT FOR THE LIVES OF MYSELF AND FEW REMAINING WARRIORS...
"...AS WELL AS THOSE OF THE WOMEN AND CHILDREN. IT WAS AN ACT OF HUMANITY *UNACCEPTABLE* BY THE CODE OF THE SUPER WARRIOR, UNACCEPTABLE TO *ME*...
"...AND UNACCEPTABLE TO THE GODS AND COUNCIL OF ARMAGARH. FOR HIS HUMANITARIAN DEED IN JANASTHAN, RAMA WAS SENTENCED TO AN *EXILE* OF FOURTEEN YEARS.
"HE WAS *PUNISHED* FOR SAVING LIVES, AND I PUNISHED HIM BY CALLING HIM A *COWARD*, EVEN THOUGH I STAYED AT HIS SIDE.

"RAMA VALUES *LIFE* MORE THAN ANYTHING. I SAW HIM FIGHT FOR *YOU* AND THE PEOPLE OF MITHILA AGAINST THE ASURAS, EVEN THOUGH IT WAS NOT HIS FIGHT.
"HE WAS DRAGGED INTO IT BY *VISHWAMITRA*, THE SEER WHO BROUGHT US TO YOUR DOOMED LAND. RAMA FOUGHT BECAUSE HE COULDN'T STAND IDLE AND SEE YOUR PEOPLE SLAUGHTERED.

"RAMA SUFFERED NEAR FATAL WOUNDS IN HIS BATTLE AGAINST RAVAN'S SON DEVAN-TAK...
"...BUT HE NEVER GAVE UP.

"RAMA *SLEW* DEVAN-TAK. THE UNKIND WORDS I SAID TO MY BROTHER NOW CHOKE IN MY THROAT.
"RAMA IS NO COWARD. HE IS A TRUE WARRIOR, THE WAY WE IDEALLY SHOULD BE.
"I KNOW NOW WHY OUR FATHER CALLED HIM "THE ULTIMATE WARRIOR." RAMA IS A *HERO*..."

"... AND NOW HE LIES *DYING.*
"I CAN'T SAVE MY BROTHER.
SEETA?
"THE DIMENSIONAL PORTAL TRANSPORTED US FROM MITHILA TO THIS GODFORSAKEN *JUNKYARD*...
"... WITH THE ASURA-HAUNTED *CHITRAKUT MOUNTAINS* AT OUR BACKS, AND THE WASTED DESERTS OF *THAR* IN FRONT OF US.
"WHERE DO WE GO NOW?
CAN YOU HEAR ME?
"SHE IS A STRANGE ONE. SO UNLIKE ANYONE I HAVE EVER MET. BUT I FEEL I CAN *TRUST* HER.
"MORE THAN THAT, I HAVE STARTED *BELIEVING* IN HER. IT IS AS IF SHE CAN CHANGE THE VERY FACE OF THE EARTH WITH HER WILL, AND MAKE IT A PLACE WE ALL DREAM OF.

"FOR DAYS SHE HAS BEEN COMPLETELY SILENT. I CAN ONLY IMAGINE HER SORROW. SHE'S LOST EVERYTHING."
PRINCESS SEETA?
NO NEED FOR THAT. I WAS NEVER A PRINCESS.
RAMA WON'T LAST MUCH LONGER.
CAN'T YOU WORK SOME MIRACLE AND SAVE HIM? I SAW YOUR TEARS BRING A DEAD PLANT BACK TO LIFE.
LAKSH, PLEASE. I AM NOT GOD. LIFE AND DEATH ARE NOT IN MY HANDS.
HE WAS WOUNDED SAVING YOU!
HE WOULD NOT LET DEVAN-TAK LAY HIS FILTHY CLAWS ON YOU! THE WOUNDS HE BEARS ARE BECAUSE OF YOU!
CAN'T YOU AT LEAST... TRY?

WHAT YOUR BROTHER ASKS OF ME, I DO NOT BELIEVE I CAN DO.
I HAVE NOT THE *STRENGTH.*
NOTHING LIKE THE STRENGTH *YOU* HAVE.
HSSSS
HSSSS

LANKA, CAPITAL CITY OF NARK.
VIGADATH, CASTLE OF THE ASURA PRIME...
...RAVAN.
IF IT PLEASE MY LORD...
AS I'VE SAID, YOU NEED NOT ASK.
ENTER, LADY DODRI.

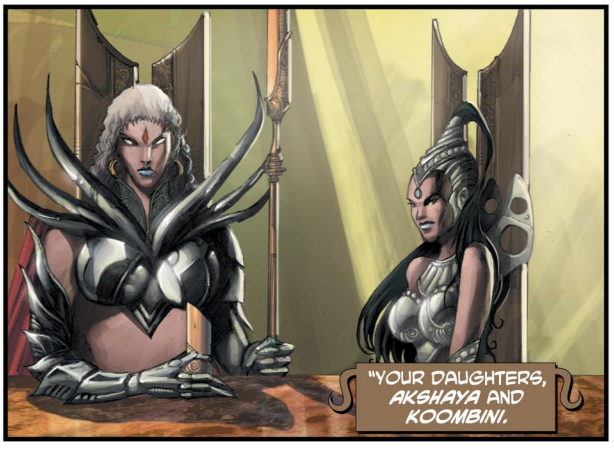
I SEE THAT YOU ARE *TROUBLED* AFTER YOUR LAST VENTURE TO ARYAVARTA, MY LORD.
TROUBLED?
IF ONLY I COULD UNDERSTAND THE *MEANING* OF THAT EMOTION. OR *ANY* EMOTION.
I WISH YOU TO *DO* SOMETHING FOR ME, MY LADY.
YOU HAVE, BUT TO UTTER THE WORD.
THEN DRAW YOUR BLADE...
...AND *STRIKE* ME.
MY LORD?
I *COMMAND* IT.
YOU SEE?

I FEEL NOTHING. NO PAIN...
NO PLEASURE.
NOTHING.
NOT JOY.
NOT FEAR.
NOT LOVE.
NOT HATE.
I CAN NEVER UNDERSTAND HOW IT FEELS TO BE ALIVE.
THAT IS WHAT MAKES YOU MORE POWERFUL THAN ANY OTHER CREATURE ON EARTH.
THAT IS WHAT MAKES ME INCOMPLETE.
ONLY THE GIRL FROM MITHILA CAN FILL THAT VOID. SHE HAS THE POWER OF EARTH, THE SECRET OF LIFE.
IN THAT ASPECT, SHE IS FAR MORE POWERFUL THAN I. BUT IF I CAN CONTROL THE ENERGY SHE WIELDS, THEN I WILL KNOW THE TRUTH OF LIFE.
AND THEN?
AND THEN I SHALL BECOME GOD.
I'M AFRAID MORE IMMEDIATE CONCERNS DEMAND MY LORD'S ATTENTION.
THE LORDS OF NARK REQUEST YOUR PRESENCE, IN ORDER TO PRESENT REPORTS OF THE CONQUEST.
AS IF I AM OBLIVIOUS. WHICH OF THEM HAVE COME TO WASTE MY TIME?

ALL THE LORDS OF YOUR VAST CONTINENT HAVE CONGREGATED TODAY.

"PRIME MINISTER KUBERA.

"YOUR SONS, PRAA-HASTA AND ATIK-AYA.

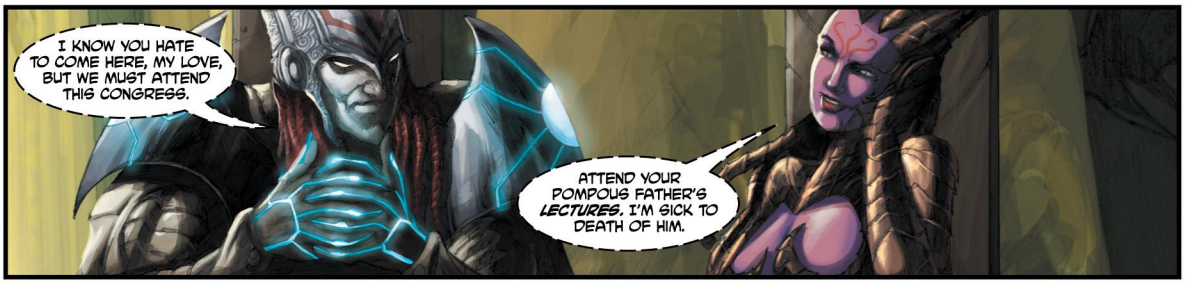

"YOUR DAUGHTERS, AKSHAYA AND KOOMBINI.

"THE NECROMANCER CHIEF, CHANDA, AWAITS.

"THE DAITYA LORD RAHU HAS RETURNED FROM CHITRAKUT. OUR STRONGHOLD IN ARYAVARTA IS SECURE.

"THE BRISCHIK KING, KAITAV IS HERE, WITH THE REPORTS OF VENOM PRODUCTION.

"AND OF COURSE, YOUR SON MEGHNAD, WITH HIS CONSORT, THE NAGA PRINCESS SLOCH."


I KNOW YOU HATE TO COME HERE, MY LOVE, BUT WE MUST ATTEND THIS CONGRESS.
ATTEND YOUR POMPOUS FATHER'S *LECTURES*. I'M SICK TO DEATH OF HIM.

THE LORD OF NARK, ASURA PRIME RAVAN, GRACES YOU WITH HIS *PRESENCE...*
HUSH... HE COMES.
AS IF I CARE.

HAIL, ASURA PRIME!
HAIL, LORD RAVAN!

LORD?
I BRING NEWS OF VICTORY. WE DESTROYED A LARGE CONTINGENT OF TROOPS SENT FROM ARMAGARH TO CHITRAKUT.
WE REJOICE IN ANOTHER TRIUMPH OVER THE HUMANS!
MY LORD, I COME ON BEHALF OF MY PEOPLE, WHO SUFFER FROM THE LOSS OF FUEL. I REQUEST A SUPPLY OF BLOOD SEEDS.
BEGONE, SICKLY CHANDA. YOUR KIND ARE NOT WORTHY OF BLOOD SEED.
THAT'S FOR THE LORD TO DECIDE. ALL OF NARK HAVE AN EQUAL SHARE OF BLOOD SEED.
IT SEEMS MY FATHER IS NOT MUCH INTERESTED IN THE AFFAIRS OF HIS MINIONS, KAITAV.
TIME TO ELECT A NEW ASURA PRIME, PERHAPS?
YES.
YES, IT SEEMS THE LORD IS DISTRACTED, AS IF THE ASURA RACE IS NOW A BURDEN ON HIS SHOULDERS. HIS AGED SHOULDERS
COULD IT BE HE IS READY TO RETIRE?

A BELATED RETIREMENT INDEED!
HUSH, YOU FOOL...
HRR HAA HAA!
HRRAAAGH!
GHHHGGG
GAAAAH...
THIS MEETING...
...IS CONCLUDED.

IT DIDN'T WORK...
...I DID EVERYTHING I KNOW HOW TO DO, AND IT DIDN'T WORK.
I'M SO SORRY.
LAKSH...
...I *TRIED*, I TRULY *TRIED*, BUT I CANNOT SAVE YOUR BROTHER.
YOU BELIEVE I CAN DO *MIRACLES*, BUT I TELL YOU I HAVE NO *CONTROL* OVER IT.
THIRSTY...

...I'M JUST SO THIRSTY.
DO YOU THINK ONE OF YOU...COULD GET ME SOMETHING TO DRINK?
RAMA?
CAREFUL, BROTHER!
YOU'RE STILL WEAK. YOUR WOUNDS ARE HEALED, BUT YOU'VE LOST A LOT OF BLOOD.
DO YOU REMEMBER ANYTHING?
I WAS FIGHTING DEVAN-TAK. HE WOUNDED ME, BUT I WAS ABLE TO SLAY HIM, AND THEN...
THEN...
...HER.
SEETA HEALED YOU, BROTHER.
I TOLD YOU, SHE IS UNLIKE ANYONE WE HAVE EVER MET. SHE BROUGHT YOU BACK.
I OWE YOU MY LIFE. HOW DO I REPAY YOU?
I'LL...FETCH SOME WATER.
BY THE GODS, RAMA! HER TEARS BROUGHT A SAPLING BACK FROM DEATH...
...AND NOW MY BIG BLUE BROTHER!
THERE IS SOMETHING ABOUT HER, LAKSHMAN. SHE IS--
EEEAAAA!

SEETA!
WHAT...
...WHAT ARE THESE THINGS?
I DON'T KNOW...
...BUT THERE ARE TOO DAMN MANY OF THEM!
I FEAR MY RECOVERY...
...MIGHT BE SHORT-LIVED...
CAN YOU EVEN STAND?

DAMNATION!
I SURVIVED, ASSASSINS, ASURAS, EVEN VISHWAMITRA! I'LL NOT DIE AT THE HANDS OF A BUNCH OF OVERSIZED RATS!
BROTHER...
...SHUT UP AND FIGHT!
A FINE CATCH.
A FINE CATCH INDEED.
THREE BIG, STRONG ONES.
THERE SHALL BE MEAT ENOUGH FOR ALL OF SHAAB'S CHILDREN!

PREPARE THEM.
YOU... YOU CAN'T BE...
...YOU'RE NOT SERIOUSLY GOING TO EAT US?
THIS IS EVIL!
IS IT EVIL FOR US TO BE HUNGRY, SWEET MEAT? SHAAB AND HER CHILDREN MUST FEED, AND IN THE JUNKYARD OF PAMPA, FOOD IS EVEN SCARCER THAN LOVE.
THERE IS NO GOOD OR EVIL IN THE WASTELANDS...
...THERE'S JUST PREDATOR AND PREY.
SEETA, DO SOMETHING...
BUT... I CAN'T...
...I DON'T KNOW HOW TO CONTROL WHAT I DO.
YOU HAVE TO. YOU'RE THE ONE WHO CAN BRING LIFE. SEETA...
...I BELIEVE IN YOU.

I WILL *TRY*...

WHAT IN THE NAME OF EARTH IS THIS?

THIS *IS* EARTH...

...AS IT *SHOULD* BE.

SOOO...

...THERE'S *PLENTY* FOR YOU TO EAT NOW. BE VEGETARIAN LIKE MY BROTHER.

THIS IS A BOUNTY FROM HEAVEN!
AND FROM THIS, MORE BOUNTY SHALL SPROUT.
SHAAB AND HER CHILDREN WILL NEVER, EVER BE HUNGRY AGAIN!
YOU HAVE TURNED THE JUNKYARD OF PAMPA INTO AN OASIS AMID THE DESERTS OF THAR!
GODDESS...
...STAY WITH SHAAB AND HER CHILDREN. WE SHALL BE YOUR SERVANTS FOREVER.
HOW ELSE COULD WE REPAY YOU?
THAT... IS NOT NECESSARY
WELL HOW ABOUT ONE OF THOSE OLD RIDES SCATTERED AROUND THE JUNKYARD? WE CAN FIX ONE AND GET THE HELL OUT OF HERE.

TRY IT.
IT WORKS... FOR NOW.
GET SEETA AND LET'S GO.
YOU COULD HAVE STAYED WITH US, GODDESS...
MY DESTINY IS WITH MY COMPANIONS, GOOD WOMAN. I MUST JOIN THEM.
VRRRRRMMM

FARE YOU WELL, SHAAB.

WHERE NOW?
SOUTH, TO AVOID THE MOUNTAINS OF CHITRAKUT, AND THEN TOWARDS EAST TO THE NISHAAD VILLAGE.
NOT EXACTLY A SHORT JOURNEY. WHAT ARE WE SUPPOSED TO DO AMONG THOSE FISHERMEN?

WE LOST MY FRIEND GUHA IN OUR BATTLE WITH ASURAS. HIS FAMILY'S WELLBEING BECOMES MY RESPONSIBILITY NOW.
I EXPECT I'LL SPEND THE REST OF MY LIFE THERE.
NOT EXACTLY THE ANSWER I WAS HOPING FOR, BROTHER...

HUMANS FROM ARMAGARH...
...ALL ALONE IN THE WASTELANDS.
CAN WE, PRINCE ANGAD?
INDEED. LET'S GO HAVE SOME FUN...
TO BE CONTINUED.

RAMA
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Thanks to Shamik Dasgupta
IN ARMAGARH, BOYS OF A CERTAIN AGE WHO WISH TO ONE DAY BE KSHATRIYA WARRIORS ARE SENT TO THE PERILOUS FOREST OF DANDAKARANYA.
EQUIPPED WITH LITTLE FOOD, AND ARMED ONLY WITH A PRIMITIVE WEAPON, THEY ARE EXPECTED TO PROVE THEMSELVES BY BRINGING BACK A TROPHY OR CAPTURED ANIMAL.
WHEN MY TIME CAME, MY BROTHER, RAMA, WAS ONLY A FEW YEARS MY ELDER, BUT ALREADY WELL ON HIS WAY TO MANHOOD.
HIS OWN TRIAL BEHIND HIM, HE TOLD ME TO HAVE COURAGE...
...AND I SET OUT FOR THE WILDERNESS.
FOR DAYS I SEARCHED FOR A TROPHY THAT WOULD BRING ME GLORY, A WILD AND DANGEROUS BEAST THAT WOULD CAUSE MY FATHER TO SMILE UPON ME IN THE WAY THAT HE SMILED UPON RAMA.
BUT I FOUND NOTHING, ONLY A YOUNG AND PUNY VANARA. NOT MUCH OF A PRIZE, BUT IF I COULD CAPTURE IT, I AT LEAST WOULD NOT RETURN HOME WITH EMPTY HANDS.
BUT BEFORE I COULD CATCH THE CREATURE...

...MY CHANCES OF RETURNING HOME *AT ALL* BECAME SLIM.
THERE APPEARED AN *AJGAR*, BIGGER THAN ANY I HAD EVER SEEN. THE GREAT SERPENT SWEPT ME UP IN ITS COILS, AND SOUGHT TO CRUSH *ME* AS WELL AS THE VANARA...
...UNTIL *RAMA* APPEARED.
THAT WAS THE *FIRST* TIME RAMA SAVED MY LIFE...
...THOUGH BY NO MEANS THE *LAST*.
HE OFFERED ME THE AJGAR'S HEAD, A SPLENDID TROPHY THAT WOULD BRING GREAT ACCLAIM, PERHAPS EVEN MY FATHER'S APPROVAL.
...AND TOLD ME HE PREFERRED THE VANARA'S *FRIENDSHIP*, A THING THAT SOMEDAY MIGHT PROVE FAR MORE VALUABLE THAN A TROPHY MOUNTED UPON A WALL.
I ASKED MY BROTHER IF HE DID NOT WISH TO KEEP SUCH A RARE PRIZE FOR *HIMSELF*. BUT RAMA SMILED IN THAT WAY OF HIS...
RAMA WAS NOT MUCH MORE THAN A *BOY* THEN...

...BUT THAT DAY I GLIMPSED THE MAN...
...AND THE HERO...
...THAT HE WOULD BECOME.
AVONOT
NEXT: RAVAN

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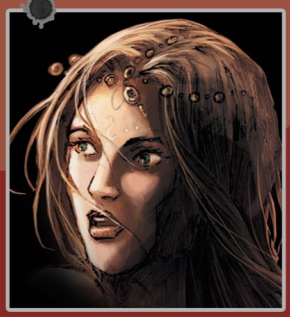
PREVIOUSLY...

Thousands of years in the future, an epic unfolds. From his stronghold on the continent of Nark, the evil **Ravan** means to crush the world under his heel. But the free-willed races of the lands of Aryavarta, led by the humans in the city of Armagarh, resist the dark lord's conquests. However, treachery resulted in the exile of **Rama**, who is Armagarh's greatest warrior. Along with his younger brother, **Lakshman**, and the beautiful **Seeta**, Rama travels the land, dreaming of restoring the earth to its former glory.

Wounded in battle, Rama teetered between life and death in the deserts of Thar. But his life was saved by Seeta, who displayed amazing powers in healing not only Rama, but the blasted lands of the desert as well. Seeta transformed the wasteland into an orchard, a veritable oasis in the desert. Now Rama, Lakshman and Seeta continue their journey, unaware that they are being watched by a dangerous band of Vanara rovers, led by **Prince Angad**...



"...LOOKS LIKE WE HAVE SOME *UNWANTED COMPANY.*"

INDEED, PRINCE ANGAD! BEEN SOME TIME SINCE WE COME ACROSS *HUMANS!*

PATIENCE, BOYS. LET'S *PLAY* A LITTLE BEFORE THE *KILL!*

DAMNED VANARAS!

WHAT THE HELL ARE THEY DOING SO FAR AWAY FROM THEIR HOME IN *KISHKINDHA?*

BLAM

BLAM

BLAM

THEY'RE GAINING!

VREEOW

VREEOW

IF ANY OF YOU WRETCHES ACTUALLY *HIT* THE HUMANS, I'LL HAVE YOUR *HEAD!*

WRECK THEIR *VEHICLE*, BUT I WANT THEM *ALIVE!*

HEY!
THAT'S ENOUGH OF THAT.
CHKK
COME AND GET SOME, YOU FILTHY MONKEYS!
LAKSH!
GET BACK IN YOUR SEAT, YOU IDIOT!

HRAARR!
COME ON, A LITTLE CLOSER, JUST A LITTLE CLOSER...
HAARGH!
WHUMP
THE ANT KNOWS HOW TO STING...
FOOSH
...BUT ANTS ALWAYS END UP SQUASHED.
BRAKKOOM
HANG ON!

STOP SQUIRMING!
IF I STOP SQUIRMING I START FALLING!
I DON'T THINK WE CAN OUTRUN THEM...
...AND WE DON'T HAVE ANY GUNS!
WHAT ABOUT THE HARADHANU MY FATHER GAVE YOU IN MITHILA?
THIS THING? I DON'T EVEN KNOW HOW TO...
...USE IT.
KLIK
KLIK
BY THE GODS!
KLAK
YOU DRIVE.
BUT I'VE NEVER DRIVEN ONE OF THESE!
JUST KEEP US STRAIGHT...

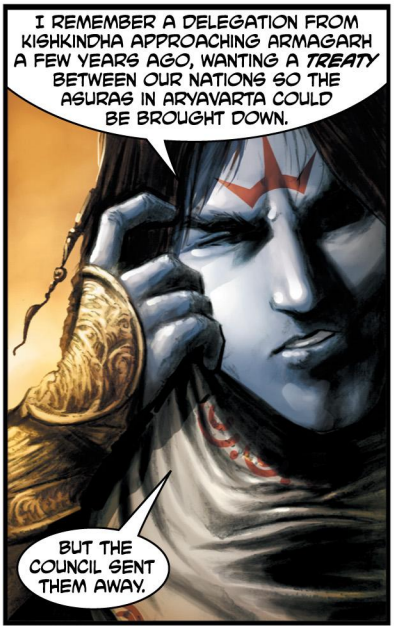
...SO I CAN SHOOT STRAIGHT.
OH...
WHABOOM

I OWE YOUR FATHER A VERY BIG THANK YOU.
HRAAARH!
I THINK ALL YOU DID WAS MAKE HIM MAD, BROTHER.
HE WON'T BE MAD MUCH LONGER. HIS FUEL TANK'S ON FIRE, IT'S GOING TO EXPLODE.
RAMA, NO, I DON'T WANT ANY MORE DEATH!
DON'T TELL ME...
...TELL HIM!
CHANK

HUMAN SCUM!
ENOUGH OF THIS.
YOU DARE TO CHALLENGE A PRINCE OF KISHKINDHA?!
CHALLENGE YOU?
I'M SAVING YOUR LIFE.
UHFF!
BAKOOM

I'M GLAD YOU SAVED HIS SORRY, HAIRY HIDE, RAMA...
...BECAUSE I'M GOING TO KILL HIM.
LAST WORDS?
JUST THIS, PRETTY BOY...
FSSH
...LOOK AROUND.
DON'T BE AFRAID, THEY WON'T HARM A HAIR ON YOUR HEAD UNTIL I SAY SO.
WHY DID YOU ATTACK US?

MY TROOP AND I NEVER MISS AN OPPORTUNITY TO COLLECT HUMAN HEADS. IT'S THE *LEAST* WE CAN DO...
...AFTER *YOUR* COWARDLY NATION COULDN'T MUSTER ENOUGH COURAGE TO JOIN KISHKINDHA AND *DESTROY* THE ASURAS ONCE AND FOR ALL.


I REMEMBER A DELEGATION FROM KISHKINDHA APPROACHING ARMAGARH A FEW YEARS AGO, WANTING A *TREATY* BETWEEN OUR NATIONS SO THE ASURAS IN ARYAVARTA COULD BE BROUGHT DOWN.
BUT THE COUNCIL SENT THEM AWAY.

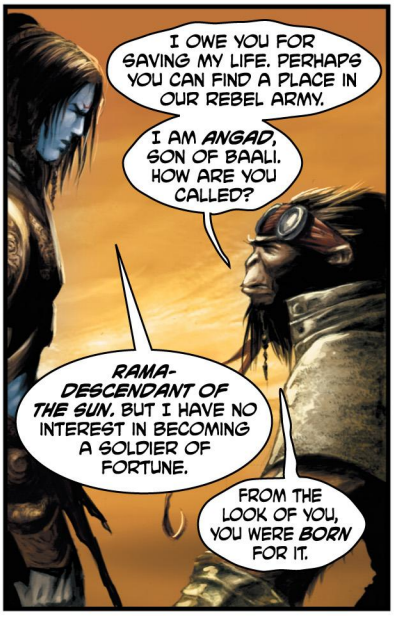
OUR FATHER, KING DASHRATH, WAS FOR THE TREATY, BUT A MAJORITY OF THE COUNCIL VOTED AGAINST IT.

YOU ARE THE SONS OF *DASHRATH*?
HE IS THE MOST HONORABLE MAN IN ARMAGARH.

WAS.
OUR FATHER LIVES NO MORE, AND ARMAGARH IS NO LONGER OUR HOME. WE ARE EXILED FROM OUR LAND.

IT SEEMS ARMAGARH SUFFERS THROUGH *DARK TIMES*, NOT UNLIKE KISHKINDHA.
OUR LAND IS TORN BY CIVIL WAR. WHEN YOUR NATION REFUSED ALLIANCE WITH US, MY FATHER, *BAALI*, LED THE GREATEST ARMY EVER AMASSED IN ARYAVARTA AND *ATTACKED* THE ASURAS.
VICTORY WAS *OURS*. BUT IN THE END, RAVAN'S *VENOM* DESTROYED MY FATHER'S SANITY. MY FATHER RETURNED TO OUR LAND, BUT WAS FOREVER CHANGED INTO A *MONSTER*.

NOW MY GOOD UNCLE, *SHUGREAVE*, FIGHTS A HOPELESS BATTLE AGAINST HIS MAD RULE, WHILE I SEARCH THE WHOLE OF ARYAVARTA FOR MERCENARIES WHO COULD HELP US *BRING DOWN* MY FATHER.


I OWE YOU FOR SAVING MY LIFE. PERHAPS YOU CAN FIND A PLACE IN OUR REBEL ARMY.
I AM *ANGAD*, SON OF BAALI. HOW ARE YOU CALLED?
RAMA-DESCENDANT OF THE SUN. BUT I HAVE NO INTEREST IN BECOMING A SOLDIER OF FORTUNE.
FROM THE LOOK OF YOU, YOU WERE *BORN* FOR IT.

THANKS... BUT NO.
YOU *CAN* TELL US THOUGH WHERE WE CAN FIND SOME PROVISIONS AND SHELTER.
HEAD SOUTH...

"...THERE AT FOOT OF THE CHITRAKUT RANGE LIES THE FREE LAND OF *PANCHVATI*.

"MANY CITIES BEAR APPELLATIONS --'THE MAGNIFICENT,' OR 'THE DECADENT' --BUT PANCHVATI HAS NO NEED OF SUCH. A CITY OF SMUGGLERS, BRIGANDS AND THIEVES OF ALL NATIONS, ITS MIGHT AND DECADENCE ARE SO WELL KNOWN THAT ANY APPELLATION MIGHT SEEM LIKE *GILT* LAID UPON *GOLD*.

"EVERY VICE CAN BE HAD WITHIN PANCHVATI'S GRANITE WALLS.

"THE STENCH OF SLAVERS FROM THE *BRISH* IS OFTEN DROWNED IN THE SCENT OF ORANGES FROM *RISHYA*, OF MYRRH AND CLOVES FROM *GODNAR*, OF ATTAR AND ROSES FROM *KIRTA*, AND SUBTLE PERFUMES FROM *GANDHA*.

"YOU'LL SEE FIERCE *BEAR-MEN* OF JAMBA RUBBING SHOULDERS WITH THE SCHOLARS OF THE *KURU ISLES*, OR *VANARA* MERCENARIES DRINKING WITH TRADERS OF *NARK*.

"IT IS SAID THAT SELDOM A DAY PASSES IN PANCHVATI WITHOUT A MEETING OF CREATURES, EACH OF WHOM BELIEVING THE OTHER'S LAND TO BE *FABLE*.

"PANCHVATI IS RULED BY THE THREE ASURAS --TWO BROTHERS AND THEIR SISTER.

"*DUSHAN*, THE CORRUPT...

"...*KHARA*, THE ELDEST, LORD OF AVARICE...

"...AND *SOORNAKA* THE BLACK HEARTED.

"THEY ARE RAKSHASAS WHO FLED NARK YEARS AGO, DECLARING THEMSELVES FREE OF RAVAN'S RULE. IT IS SAID THEY BELONG TO THE GRAKSH CLAN OF LANKA, KIN TO THE ASURA PRIME HIMSELF.

"THEY HAVE THEIR SHARE OF WHATEVER IS TRAFFICKED THROUGH PANCHVATI, AND ANYTHING CAN BE HAD FOR A PRICE: MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL..."

"...*ENTERTAINMENT*.

"EVERY WEEK THE SPECTACLE OF THE DUEL OF DESPAIR TAKES PLACE IN THE ARENA, WHERE THOUSANDS OF SPECTATORS GAMBLE ON THE LIVES OF COMBATANTS WHO MUST FIGHT TO THE DEATH.

"FOR THE PAST YEAR THERE HAS BEEN AN *UNBEATEN* CHAMPION, CALLED *THE GENERAL*, HIS TRUE IDENTITY UNKNOWN. HE WOULD MAKE A FINE ADDITION TO OUR ARMY, BUT KHARA REFUSES TO SELL HIM.

"TRY YOUR LUCK IN PANCHVATI...

"...BUT BEAR IN MIND, IT IS *NOT* KNOWN FOR ITS HOSPITALITY TO HUMAN BEINGS."
I'M NOT EXPECTING A WARM WELCOME.
WHAT CAN WE DO? BAD REPUTATION FOLLOWS ARMAGARHIANS LIKE A SHADOW.
SEETA, I SUGGEST THAT YOU COVER YOURSELF WITH LAKSH'S CLOAK. BETTER YOU'RE NOT SEEN.
BUT WHY?
BECAUSE IT'S HARD *NOT* TO NOTICE YOU. MY DISCREET BROTHER WANTS TO KEEP A LOW PROFILE ONCE WE REACH THE CITY.
VISH APPOINTED HIM YOUR PROTECTOR, AND HE'S VERY *EARNEST* AT HIS DUTIES.
SEEMS LIKE ENTRY IS *RESTRICTED.* WE'LL HAVE TO LEAVE THE BIKE OUT HERE.

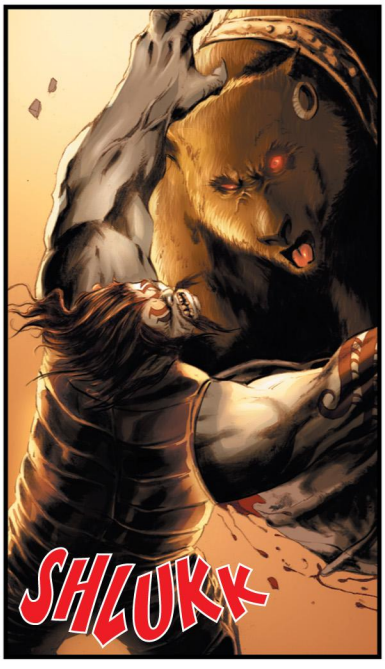
IF YOU WANT TO GET INSIDE, YOU'LL *PAY* FOR IT!
TEN MUDRAS FOR EACH!
GREETINGS, SIR.
WE ARE POOR PILGRIMS FROM THE EAST. WE SEEK FOOD AND SHELTER FOR A NIGHT OR TWO.
NEVER HAVE I SEEN ARMAGARHIANS SO FAR FROM THEIR LAND.
FOR YOU... *TWENTY MUDRAS* EACH. WE DON'T HAVE MUCH LIKING FOR *HUMANS*.
WHERE ARE WE GOING TO GET SIXTY MUDRAS? WE'RE *BROKE*.
NO, WE'RE NOT
GIVE THIS TO HIM, I THINK IT'S WORTH WHAT HE'S ASKING.
SEETA, NO, THIS IS THE *LAST MEMORY* OF MITHILA YOU HAVE.
MEMORIES ARE KEPT IN THE *HEART*, NOT IN *ADORNMENTS*.
ENOUGH?
FOR *THREE* OF YOU? WHO IS THAT HOODED ONE?
PARDON, SIR, BUT THAT'S OUR AGED MOTHER. SHE SUFFERS FROM HIDEOUS *ULCERS* ON HER FACE. SHALL I TAKE OFF THE HOOD?
THAT... WON'T BE NECESSARY.

AGED MOTHER!
A JEST! YOU HAVE A SENSE OF HUMOR...
...UNLIKE MY BROTHER.
LET'S EAT. AFTER THAT WE CAN LOOK FOR SUPPLIES.
FINALLY YOU HAVE A GOOD IDEA.
BAR·CAFÉ
I LIKE PANCHVATI ALREADY.

GREETINGS, GOOD SIR. WHAT HAVE YOU ON YOUR *MENU*?
TENDER VEAL FROM THE FORESTS OF SOUTH, RED MEAT OF BRISH, TANDOORI KEBABS OF GARUDA BIRDS, SPICY CURRIES OF SEA TURTLES, AND A HUNDRED OTHER DISHES.
I, UH, PREFER SOMETHING *VEGETARIAN*. HAVE YOU LENTIL SOUP AND MILK?
OF COURSE. AND YOUR FRIENDS? THE *SAME*?
NONSENSE! I'LL HAVE TANDOORI KEBABS.
RAMA, I WONDER HOW YOU MAINTAIN YOURSELF ON A PURE VEGETARIAN DIET.
HOY, BARTENDER! PORK AND A FLAGON OF HONEY!
PRAISE THE FOLLY OF STUPID HUMAN PILGRIMS! I AM *RICH* FOR THE NIGHT!
OWW! LOOK WHERE YOU *STEP*, YOU BIG...

OLD MOTHER, IS IT? THIS ONE WILL FETCH ME AT LEAST FIVE THOUSAND MUDRAS!
LET GO OF HER, SHE'S A CUSTOMER!
AND WHO GIVESSSS YOU THE RIGHT TO CLAIM HER? SHE'SSS MINE!
RRRGH!!!
SSSS!!!
EXCUSE ME, GENTLEMEN...
...BUT SHE'S WITH HIM.

SKAASH
NO ONE BRINGS TROUBLE INTO MY PLACE!


SHLUKK

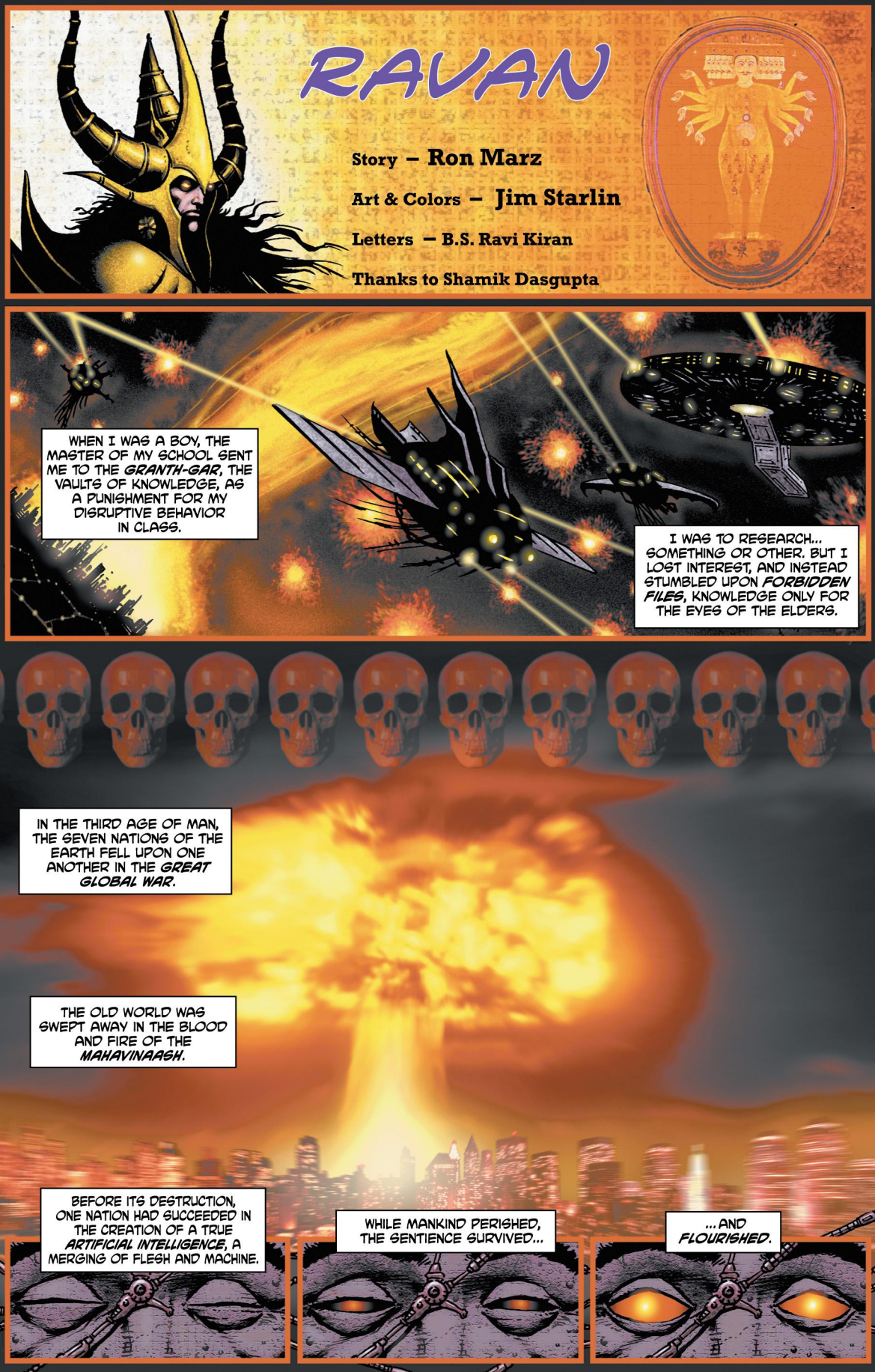
SSSSiii

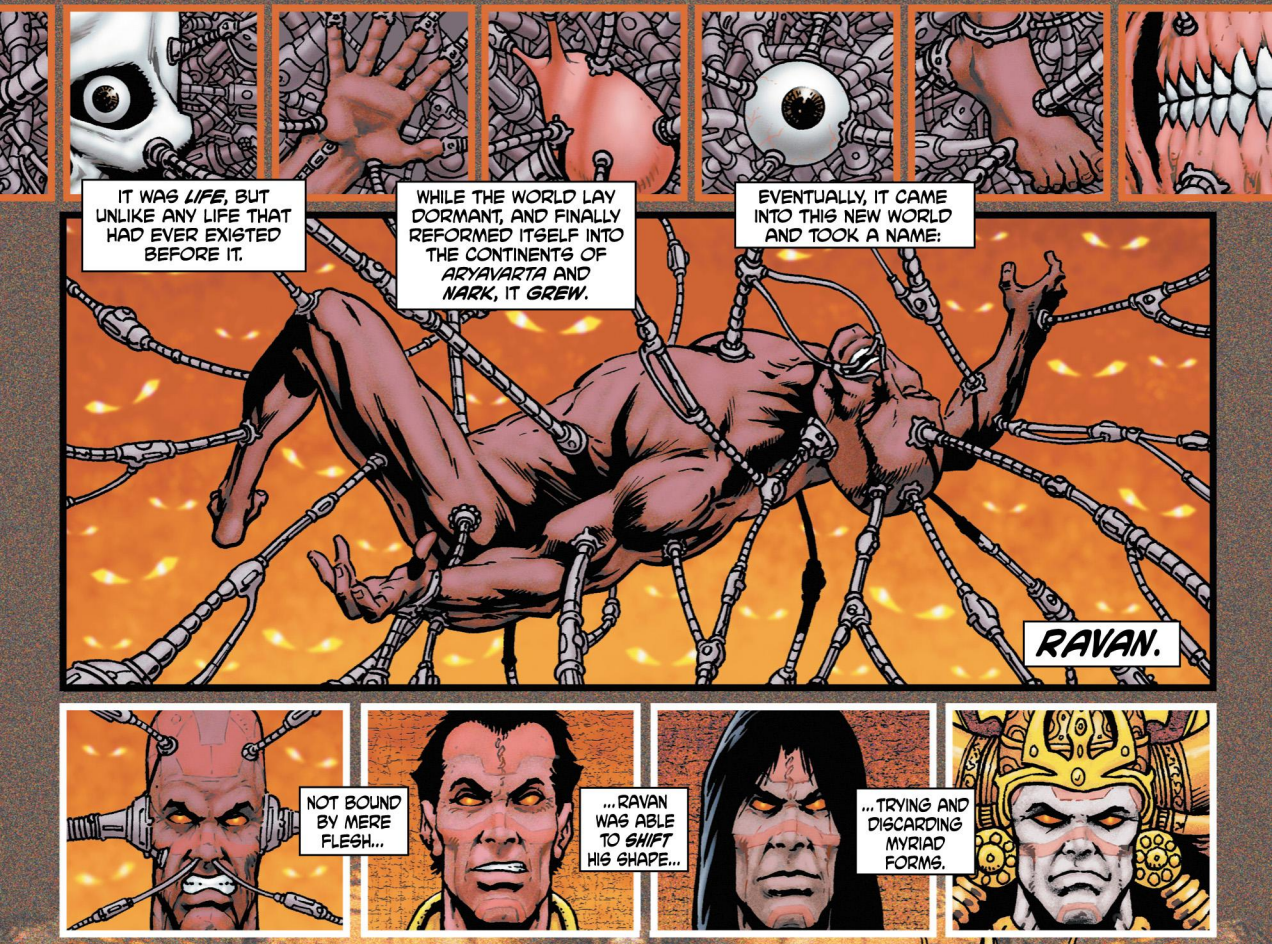
SEETA!

OUT OF MY WAY, BLAST YOU!
LITTLE SCOUNDREL!
AWRK!
I THINK WE'LL GET OUR FOOD SOMEWHERE ELSE.
THE SERVICE HERE SUCKS ANYWAY.
GET THEM!

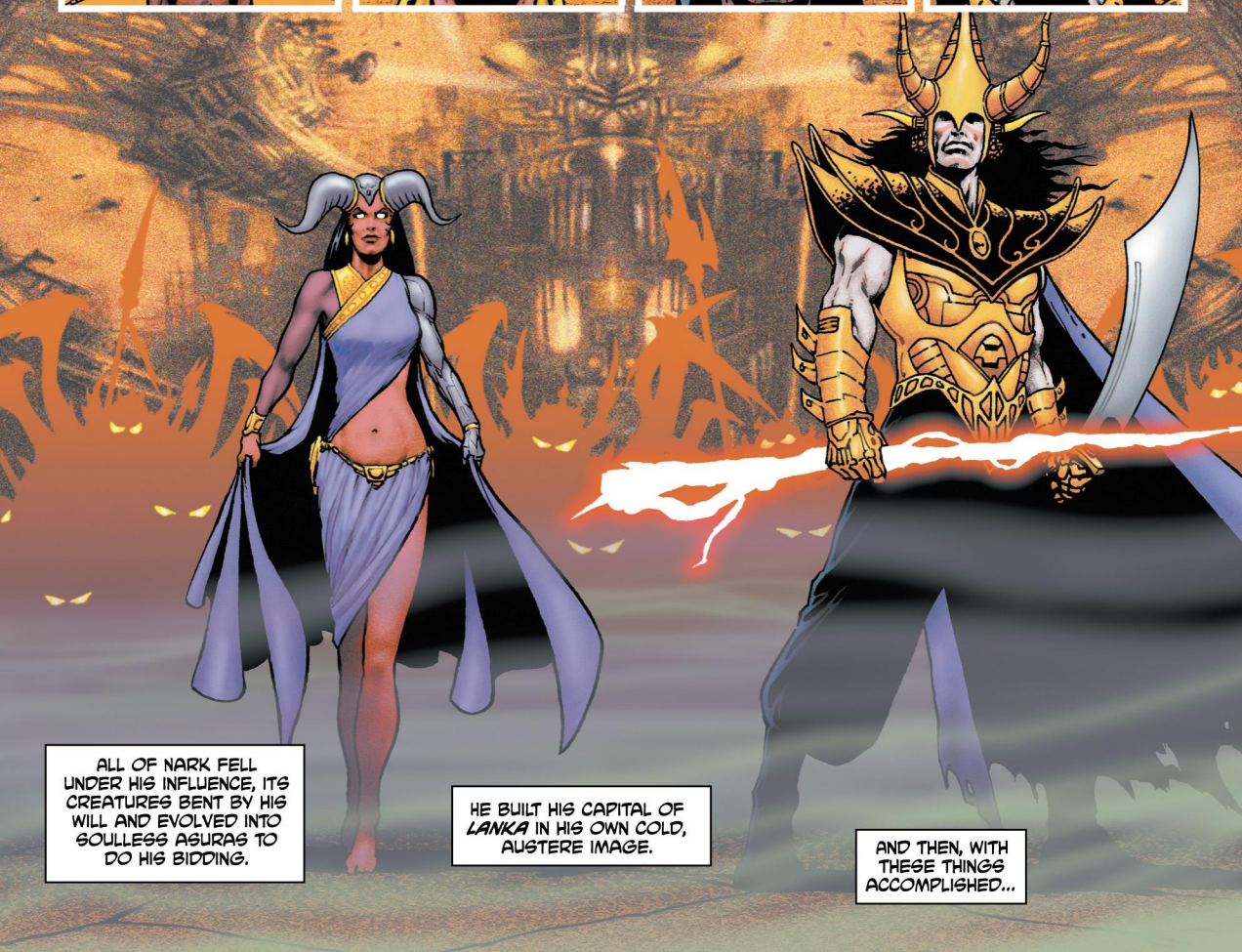
FIFTEEN MUDRAS TO WHOEVER CAPTURES THE GIRL!
OFFAL OF NARK, WE'RE TRAPPED.
PANCHVATI HASN'T SEEN A LASS LIKE YOU IN AGES. A WOMAN TO DIE FOR!
THEN TO THE DEATH IT SHALL BE.
BWOOM
I DIDN'T SAVE YOU FROM RAVAN IN MITHILA ONLY TO HAVE YOU KILLED BY A BUNCH OF BRUTES.
BY THE GODS!

VISH!
WE THOUGHT YOU WERE DEAD!
IT'S NOT EASY TO KILL ONE OF THE SEVEN SEERS, EVEN FOR RAVAN HIMSELF.
VISHWAMITRA IS AT YOUR SERVICE AGAIN!
TO BE CONTINUED.


RAVAN
Story – Ron Marz
Art & Colors – Jim Starlin
Letters – B.S. Ravi Kiran
Thanks to Shamik Dasgupta
WHEN I WAS A BOY, THE MASTER OF MY SCHOOL SENT ME TO THE GRANTH-GAR, THE VAULTS OF KNOWLEDGE, AS A PUNISHMENT FOR MY DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR IN CLASS.
I WAS TO RESEARCH... SOMETHING OR OTHER. BUT I LOST INTEREST, AND INSTEAD STUMBLED UPON FORBIDDEN FILES, KNOWLEDGE ONLY FOR THE EYES OF THE ELDERS.
IN THE THIRD AGE OF MAN, THE SEVEN NATIONS OF THE EARTH FELL UPON ONE ANOTHER IN THE GREAT GLOBAL WAR.
THE OLD WORLD WAS SWEPT AWAY IN THE BLOOD AND FIRE OF THE MAHAVINAASH.
BEFORE ITS DESTRUCTION, ONE NATION HAD SUCCEEDED IN THE CREATION OF A TRUE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, A MERGING OF FLESH AND MACHINE.
WHILE MANKIND PERISHED, THE SENTIENCE SURVIVED...
...AND FLOURISHED.


IT WAS *LIFE*, BUT UNLIKE ANY LIFE THAT HAD EVER EXISTED BEFORE IT.
WHILE THE WORLD LAY DORMANT, AND FINALLY REFORMED ITSELF INTO THE CONTINENTS OF *ARYAVARTA* AND *NARK*, IT *GREW*.
EVENTUALLY, IT CAME INTO THIS NEW WORLD AND TOOK A NAME:
RAVAN.

NOT BOUND BY MERE FLESH...
...RAVAN WAS ABLE TO *SHIFT* HIS SHAPE...
...TRYING AND DISCARDING MYRIAD FORMS.


ALL OF NARK FELL UNDER HIS INFLUENCE, ITS CREATURES BENT BY HIS WILL AND EVOLVED INTO SOULLESS ASURAS TO DO HIS BIDDING.
HE BUILT HIS CAPITAL OF *LANKA* IN HIS OWN COLD, AUSTERE IMAGE.
AND THEN, WITH THESE THINGS ACCOMPLISHED...

...HE TURNED HIS MALIGN ATTENTION TOWARD ARYAVARTA, AND MANKIND.
HIS BEING EXTENDED INTO NO LESS THAN *TEN* HEADS, RAVAN IS A CREATION NEITHER MAN NOR MACHINE, BUT WITH THE WORST TRAITS OF EACH.
JEALOUS OF WHAT WE ARE, HE MEANS TO BRING ABOUT OUR *END*.
I RAN ALL THE WAY HOME FROM THE GRANTH-GAR, AND HID IN A CLOSET UNTIL MY BROTHERS FOUND ME.
STARLIN
NEXT: HANUMAN

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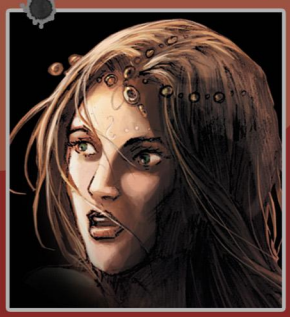
PREVIOUSLY...

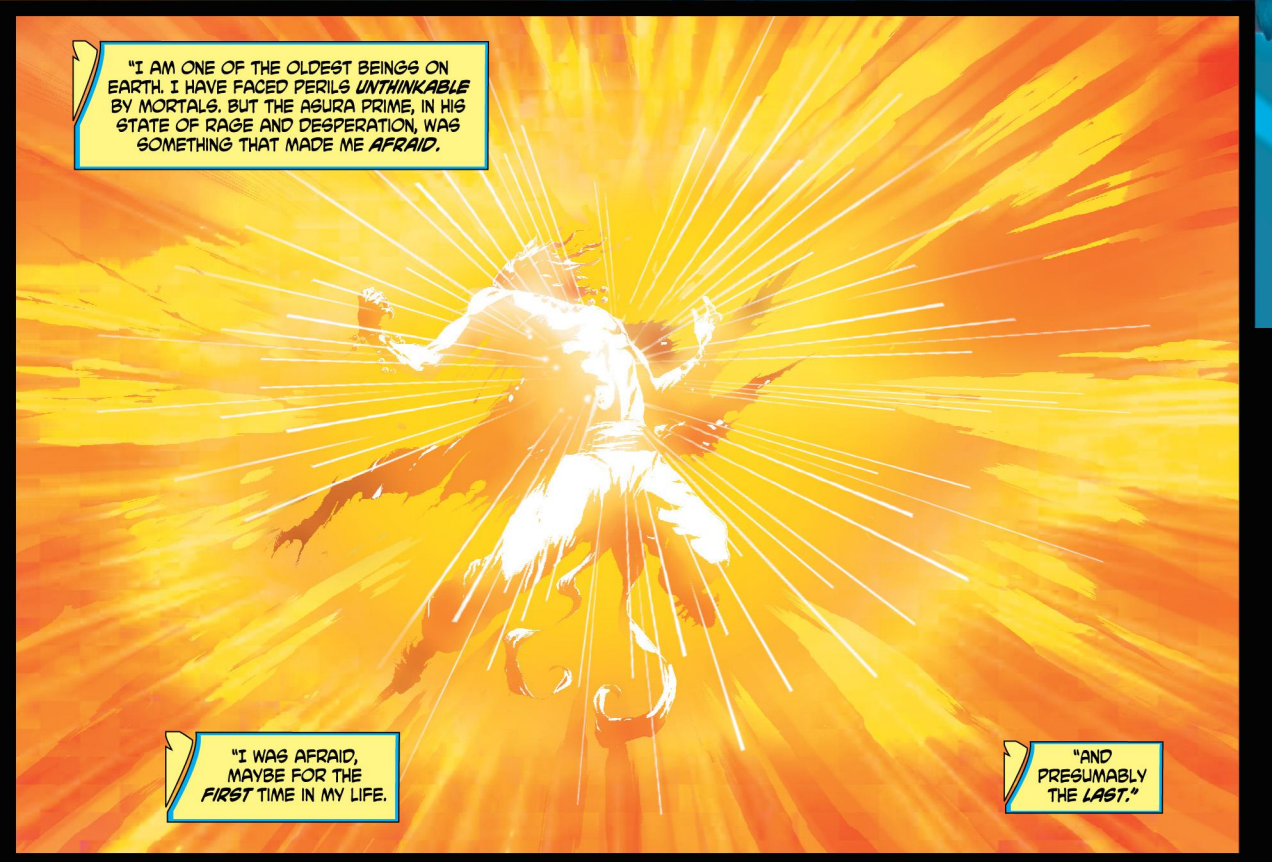
Thousands of years in the future, an epic unfolds. From his stronghold on the continent of Nark, the evil **Ravan** means to crush the world under his heel. But the free-willed races of the lands of Aryavarta, led by the humans of the city of Armagarh, resist the dark lord. However, treachery resulted in the exile of **Rama**, who is Armagarh's greatest warrior. Along with his younger brother, **Lakshman**, and beautiful **Seeta**, Rama travels the land, dreaming of restoring the earth to its former glory.

Rama, Lakshman and Seeta have journeyed to Panchvati, a city filled with criminals, cutthroats and fugitives. Trouble finds them almost immediately, as Rama and Lakshman are forced to battle a gang of bear-men who are intent upon stealing Seeta. Help comes from a most unexpected source when **Vishwamitra**, thought long dead after a confrontation with Ravan, appears.



LAKSH ON THE RUN.
AS USUAL.
I SCARCELY EVEN REMEMBER WHEN THIS CAT-AND-MOUSE CHASE EVEN BEGUN. IT SEEMS LIKE AN ETERNITY. THE LUXURY OF ARMAGARH IS A FADING DREAM NOW.
THOUGH I CAN'T SAY I'M NOT THANKFUL THAT THE OLD COOT FINALLY SHOWED UP. I MUST ADMIT I MISSED VISHWAMITRA, IN SPITE OF HIM BEING THE MEAN, GARRULOUS FOOL THAT HE IS.
I'M JUST HAPPY WE'RE ALL TOGETHER AGAIN.
HEY, VISH, WE'RE ALL IN THE DARK HERE, AND I MEAN BOTH LITERALLY AND METAPHORICALLY.
WOULD YOU MIND THROWING SOME LIGHT ON HOW YOU SURVIVED RAVAN IN MITHILA? THE LAST I REMEMBER, YOU TOLD US TO RUN WHILE YOU TACKLED RAVAN ALL BY YOURSELF.
HOW DID YOU MAKE IT? DID YOU KILL THE TEN-HEADED FREAK?
DO YOU EVEN COMPREHEND WHAT YOU SAY, BOY? I FOUGHT RAVAN, THE ASURA PRIME HIMSELF. I DIDN'T KILL HIM. ON THE CONTRARY...
...HE KILLED ME.
I'M HAPPY WE'RE ALL ALIVE.

"IT WAS A FIGHT NEVER MEANT TO BE *WON*...
"...JUST TO BUY YOU ENOUGH TIME TO FLEE MITHILA. I FACED RAVAN BEFORE, WHEN THIS WORLD WAS YOUNG, JUST SURVIVING THROUGH THE GREAT RUIN.
"HE WAS NEVER *THIS* POWERFUL.
"NEVER THIS *DESPERATE*.
"I TRIED TO HOLD ON AS LONG AS POSSIBLE... WHICH WAS GETTING *IMPOSSIBLE* WITH EVERY PASSING MOMENT.
"FINALLY HE *OVERWHELMED* ME.
"I WAS HELPLESS. I SAW MY LIFE PASSING AWAY AS I TRIED TO HOLD ON TO IT...
"...LIKE A FISTFUL OF SAND.


"I AM ONE OF THE OLDEST BEINGS ON EARTH. I HAVE FACED PERILS *UNTHINKABLE* BY MORTALS. BUT THE ASURA PRIME, IN HIS STATE OF RAGE AND DESPERATION, WAS SOMETHING THAT MADE ME *AFRAID.*
"I WAS AFRAID, MAYBE FOR THE *FIRST* TIME IN MY LIFE.
"AND PRESUMABLY THE *LAST.*"

"I DIDN'T DIE.
"SOMEHOW, MY PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL ESSENCE WAS TRANSPORTED THROUGH THE LOKA RIFT...
"...TOSSING ME THROUGH THE DIMENSIONAL BARRIERS WHICH KEEP OUR WORLD SEPARATE FROM OTHER REALITIES. I SLIPPED OUT OF CERTAIN DEATH.
"AND I CROSSED THE LOKAS, THE DIMENSIONS THAT EXIST PARALLEL TO THIS WORLD, NEVER MEANT TO BE SEEN.
"NEVER!
"SOME CAN COLLAPSE THE HEART, MIND AND SOUL WITH HORRORS!
"YET OTHERS ARE OF SUCH IMPOSSIBLE BEAUTY THAT OUR INTELLECT CAN SCARCELY COMPREHEND SUCH MAGNIFICENCE. YOUR HEART MIGHT SWELL AND EXPLODE TO BEHOLD ITS SPLENDOR.
"I SAW THEM ALL!
"I DON'T UNDERSTAND THE MYSTERIOUS GAMES OF DESTINY, BUT SOMEHOW I WAS THROWN BACK TO THIS REALITY, WITH MY BODY AND LIFE BACK..."

...HARDLY A SCRATCH ON ME.
I FOUND MYSELF A FEW YOJANS FROM *PANCHVATI*. I KNEW YOU'D EVENTUALLY END UP HERE AFTER LEAVING MITHILA AND TELEPORTING TO THE WASTELANDS.
AND I KNEW FINDING YOU WOULDN'T BE HARD...SINCE *YOU* WOULD SURELY FIND TROUBLE.
YOU WERE *NEVER* KNOWN FOR YOUR SENSE OF HUMOR, VISHWAMITRA. BUT I ADMIT IT'S *GOOD* TO HAVE YOU BACK.
NOW WOULD YOU MIND TELLING US WHERE WE'RE GOING? IT FEELS LIKE *AGES* SINCE WE DROPPED DOWN THAT DUCT AND ENTERED THESE FILTHY TUNNELS.
WE ARE HERE.
I JUST HOPE IT'S NOT AS SMELLY AND STUFFY *WITHIN*.
CLICK
WE'LL BE SAFE.
FOR NOW AT LEAST.

NO SUCH LUCK, IT'S JUST AS SMELLY AND STUFFY.
I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE THIS. ARE YOU *SURE* IT'S SAFE?
WOW... WHAT *IS* THIS PLACE?
YES. IT EXISTS FROM THE PRE-APOCALYPTIC AGE. DURING THE WARS THEY CALLED IT A *FALLOUT SHELTER,* BUT THE PURPOSE WAS SOMETHING GREATER.
MUCH, *MUCH* GREATER.
IT LOOKS LIKE SOME OLD INDUSTRIAL SITE, OR A LABORATORY...
THIS IS THE PLACE WHERE *RAVAN* WAS CREATED.

BUT... HOW DO YOU KNOW OF THAT?
VISH?
VISH?
HMM...?
HOW DO YOU KNOW THIS IS THE PLACE WHERE RAVAN WAS CREATED? AND WHY DID YOU BRING US HERE? IT'S EVIL!
I KNOW. I JUST KNOW!
THIS PLACE IS SAFE. THERE IS NOTHING EVIL IN IT...NOT ANYMORE.
AND YOU ARE IN NO POSITION TO JUDGE GOOD FROM EVIL, RAMA. YOUR PERSPECTIVE IS IMMATURE AND NARROW.
JUST BE THANKFUL THAT YOU'RE SAFE HERE, AND SOON WILL BE ON YOUR WAY BACK HOME.
VISH IS ACTING A BIT WEIRD, DON'T YOU THINK? I MEAN, HE'S ALWAYS WEIRD, BUT NOW HE'S WEIRD WEIRD.
HUSH...AS LONG AS HE KEEPS US SAFE AND HELPS US FIND A WAY OUT, HE'S OKAY WITH ME.
LAKSH, WE'RE ALL TIRED AFTER WHAT WE'VE GONE THROUGH. I SUGGEST YOU CRITICIZE ME LATER, WHEN TIME IS ABUNDANT.
SEETA NEEDS REST.
FINE, WE REST FOR NOW. BUT WHAT NEXT?
WE GET OUT OF PANCHVATI. I WILL GO SOUTH WITH SEETA. I NEED TO TAKE HER TO THE COUNCIL OF ELDERS, WHERE SHE WILL BE TRAINED TO CONTROL AND USE HER POWERS.
AS FOR YOU TWO BROTHERS, YOU CAN GO WHEREVER YOU WISH. I FREE YOU OF HER BURDEN.
WHAT?

YOU >WHEEZE< BRING GOOD NEWS, CAPTAIN.
FINE. NOW WHERE'S MY MONEY?
WHAT MONEY? A FEW COINS? >KOFF< I WILL GIVE YOU MUCH MORE IF YOU BRING THEM ALIVE TO ME. FIVE HUNDRED SPARKLING MUDRAS FOR EACH OF THEM.
THE HUMANS SOUND LIKE SUPER WARRIORS, A GOOD ADDITION TO THE GLADIATOR CONTESTS OF THE ARENA OF DESPAIR.
WHILE THE WOMAN >GSSSP< WILL BE A PRIZED POSSESSION FOR ANYONE THAT CAN PAY MY PRICE.
FORGET IT, KHARA. THEY'RE TOO TROUBLESOME.
THEY KILLED THREE OF MY LIEUTENANTS AND ESCAPED, CAUSED A LOT OF DAMAGE TO MY REPUTATION. I WANT MY MONEY.
I'M MAKING A GOOD BUSINESS PROPOSITION >HIIIH< HERE. THE BHALU KING JAMBWAN IS STILL LOOKING FOR A CERTAIN TRAITOR AMONG HIS PEOPLE.
I COULD POINT OUT THAT HIS TRAITOR IS HIDING HERE IN PANCHVATI. I REMEMBER THE STORIES OF HOW THE BHALUS PUNISH THEIR CRIMINALS.
WHAT SAY YOU?
UH... OKAY...

CURSE HIM!
WAIT! I HAVE A BUSINESS PROPOSITION FOR YOU.
STAY AWAY, DUSHAN...I JUST HAD A *BUSINESS PROPOSITION* FROM YOUR LARD-BUTT BROTHER.
GET ME THE *GIRL*. FOR AGES I HAVE BEEN LOOKING FOR SOMEONE LIKE HER, AND SHE SOUNDS... EXQUISITE
THIS IS SOME ADVANCE. THERE'S *MORE* AFTER YOU HAND HER OVER TO ME.
NOW WE'RE TALKING!
CONSIDER IT *DONE*, MASTER DUSHAN!
YOU. COME HERE.
AH, MISTRESS *SOORNAKA!*
BRING ME THE *SUPER WARRIORS*. I WISH TO SHOW A THING OR TWO TO MY BROTHERS IN THE ARENA.
INDEED, M'LADY!
HEH... THE DAY *WASN'T* A COMPLETE LOSS.

THE LAST TWO DAYS WERE A COMPLETE LOSS. VISH WANTS SEETA TO GO WITH HIM, RAMA DOESN'T WANT TO LEAVE HER, AND SEETA HAS SHUT DOWN COMPLETELY.
AND HERE I AM ON THE SURFACE, PICKING GARBAGE DUMPS FOR FOOD.
AT LEAST THESE BANDAGES ARE HELPING. PEOPLE THINK I'M A LEPER, AND LEAVE ME ALONE.
IF SEETA DOES GO WITH VISH...WELL, I'LL MISS HER. BUT RAMA WILL MISS HER MORE. HE'S MADLY IN LOVE WITH HER.
I'M HAPPY FOR RAMA THAT HE FINALLY LOOKS UP TO SOMETHING IN HIS LIFE. I DON'T WANT SEETA TO LEAVE. SHE MEANS A LOT TO MY DISMAL BROTHER.
HE DESERVES THAT MUCH AT LEAST.
WHOK
WHOK
NOW THEY CAN BE IDENTIFIED AND CAPTURED.
WANTED
5000
MUDRAS each
CAN'T SAY MUCH ABOUT BEING IDENTIFIABLE...
SHUT UP! I DREW IT MYSELF!
WANTED
MUDRAS each
AIN'T ANY HUMANS IN PANCHVATI EXCEPT THESE THREE. ONE IS BLUE, OTHER IS A GIRL, AND THE THIRD ONE IS PLAIN UGLY.
WHAT MORE DO YOU NEED?
YOU'RE THE BOSS.

RAMA?
IT FEELS SO STRANGE. THIS IS THE PLACE WHERE EVERYTHING STARTED. THE VERY REASON WE'RE HERE, TO STOP AN ENEMY WHO SHAPED THE WORLD INTO ITS PRESENT STATE.
TRUE. BUT I GUESS THIS IS ALSO WHERE WE PART WAYS.
VISH WANTS TO TAKE YOU TO THIS COUNCIL OF ELDERS. I WILL TREK BACK TO THE NISHAAD VILLAGE.
I DON'T KNOW WHY YOU CAN'T COME WITH ME, RAMA. IN MITHILA THEY MADE IT SO CLEAR THAT YOU HAVE TO BE WITH ME, THAT YOU ARE MY PROTECTOR.
YOU SAVED MY LIFE MORE THAN ONCE.
SO DID YOU.
I NEED TO TELL YOU SOMETHING, SEETA.
I... I'M TIRED OF RUNNING. TIRED OF FIGHTING. WHATEVER I'VE LOVED IN MY LIFE IS LOST. FIRST MY MOTHER, THEN MY HONOR AND MY COUNTRY.
WHEN I SAW MITHILA, TO ME IT WAS THE HOME I NEVER HAD. IT WAS A LAND OF PEACE AND BEAUTY AND LOVE.
I FOUGHT AGAINST THE ASURAS BECAUSE I BELIEVED MITHILA WAS WORTH FIGHTING FOR. WHEN I SAW YOU, I BELIEVED YOU WERE WORTH FIGHTING FOR.
GIVEN A CHANCE, I'D GIVE MY SOUL TO BRING BACK YOUR HOME...
...BUT LIKE THE REST OF THE WORLD IT IS RAVAGED AND DESTROYED BY RAVAN.
THIS MIGHT SOUND SELFISH. PLEASE FORGIVE ME, I'M NOT VERY GOOD AT THIS.
I DON'T WANT YOU TO LEAVE. I...
...I LOVE YOU.

RAMA!
THEY'VE PUT A HEFTY PRICE ON OUR HEADS!
I SAW THE WANTED POSTERS ABOVE. I SAY WE LEAVE PANCHVATI *IMMEDIATELY.*
SEETA, YOU NEED TO MAKE UP YOUR MIND. ARE YOU GOING WITH *US* OR WITH VISH?
I... I'M NOT...
YOU'RE COMING WITH *ME,* SEETA. THIS *CHARADE* HAS GONE LONG ENOUGH.
I CANNOT RISK YOUR LIFE ON YOUR *WHIMS.* YOU *MUST* COME WITH ME!
AND WHY DON'T YOU WANT US TO TAG ALONG?
STOP IT, LAKSH.
FROM DAY ONE, VISH MADE IT CLEAR THAT *YOU'RE* THE SOLE PROTECTOR OF SEETA. NOW HE SUDDENLY POPS UP AND WANTS TO TAKE HER AWAY TO SOME COUNCIL?
CAN SOMEONE TELL ME WHAT'S *HAPPENING* HERE?
SHE COMES WITH ME.
WHAT'S *WRONG* WITH YOU? DID YOUR SO-CALLED DEATH AND REBIRTH MESS YOU UP *COMPLETELY?*
WHAK

THAT DID IT! I'VE PUT UP WITH ENOUGH FROM YOU, OLD MAN!
THIS IS ALL BECAUSE OF YOU! YOU'RE TROUBLE, GIRL!
SHUT UP, LAKSH! YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE SAYING!
THERE'S BEEN NOTHING BUT TROUBLE FROM THE DAY SHE ENTERED OUR LIVES, ALL THE WAY BACK TO MITHILA!
CALM DOWN, LAKSH. HOW CAN YOU ACCUSE HER LIKE THAT? SHE NEVER ASKED FOR IT...
I JUST... I GOT CARRIED AWAY.
I'M SORRY, SEETA.
SEETA?
BLAST IT!

THERE YOU ARE.
WE'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR YOU FOR A LONG TIME.
AND NOW THAT WE HAVE YOU, THE OTHERS WILL SOON FOLLOW.
NO!
YOU, CAPTAIN...

...SHOULD BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU *WISH* FOR.
I MADE A MISTAKE. SOMETHING IM QUITE KNOWN FOR.
BUT THIS TIME, IT'S *DIFFERENT*. I BLEW IT *BIG TIME*.
I SHOULDN'T HAVE SAID THAT TO SEETA, AFTER ALL SHE'S DONE FOR US, FOR ALL THAT SHE MEANS TO MY BROTHER.
SHRAKK
GET THEM! PILE UP ON THEM!
CHOK
LOOK WHAT IT GOT US INTO.

WE WERE ALMOST BECOMING LIKE A *FAMILY*. RAMA LOVES HER, AND IT SEEMED SHE LOVED MY BROTHER TOO.
AND *I* KIND OF LIKED HER AS WELL. SHE WAS PROTECTIVE OF ME, LIKE THE MOTHER I'D NEVER KNOWN, OR THE SISTER I NEVER HAD.
WHY DO I ALWAYS END UP *HURTING* PEOPLE WHO LOVE ME THE MOST?
THESE CREATURES TRY TO *OVERWHELM* US, BUT RAMA FIGHTS LIKE A MACHINE.
THEY COME OUT OF THE WOODWORK, *DESPERATE*... NOT UNLIKE US. WRETCHED CREATURES, TRYING TO MAKE A LIVING IN THIS *UNFORGIVING LAND.*
THE LAST TIME I SAW THIS MUCH *RAGE* IN RAMA WAS WHEN HE KILLED *DEVAN-TAK.*
SEEEEETAAA!
I ADMIT, IT *SCARES* ME WHEN I SEE HIM LIKE THIS.

WITHOUT RAMA, I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH LONGER I CAN HOLD THEM OFF.
I'LL KEEP THEM AT BAY AS LONG AS IT TAKES TO PLAN AN ESCAPE ROUTE. WHERE THE HELL IS VISH?
THERE'S SO DAMN MANY OF THEM!
WHDD
GAAH!
SHNNK
HN...?
UNNHHH....

UHHHH...
...WHERE... AM I...?
AND WHY DOES MY HEAD HURT SO MUCH?
WHAT KIND OF PLACE IS THIS SUPPOSED TO BE?
AH, WAKEY, WAKEY, MY DEAR!
I APOLOGIZE FOR THE HEADACHE...
...A SIMPLE SIDE EFFECT OF THE POTION USED TO SUBDUE YOUR STRUGGLES. YOU GAVE A LOT OF GRIEF TO MY CHAMBERMAIDS.
I AM DUSHAN.

WHERE ARE MY FRIENDS?
THE BLUE ONE AND THE BRATTY SCOUNDREL? THEY'RE WELL TAKEN CARE OF.
YOU CAN SEE THEIR PERFORMANCE TOMORROW IN THE ARENA OF DESPAIR, IF YOU PROMISE TO BEHAVE.
WHAT'S AN ARENA OF DESPAIR? ARE YOU PLANNING TO HURT THEM? AND THE OLD MAN?
ONE THING AT A TIME, DEAR. WHAT OLD MAN DO YOU SPEAK OF? YOU HAVE MORE COMPANIONS?
I'LL HAVE TO LOOK FOR HIM, THOUGH AN OLD ONE WON'T BE WORTH MUCH.
NOW DON'T WASTE MY TIME.
YOU'RE TOO WEAK TO RESIST. THE PASSION MISTS OF GANDHA HAVE SAPPED YOUR WILL. YOU WILL MELT LIKE TAPER TO MY FIRE.
TRULY?
OH, YES...

WAKE UP, YOU SLOTH!
NAP TIME OVER!
KEEP YOUR PAWS OFF ME, DAMN YOU!
SAVE YOUR STRENGTH, YOU'LL NEED ALL OF IT VERY SOON.
WHERE IS THIS? WHERE'S RAMA?
YOU MEAN THE BLUE ONE? HE'S COOPERATING QUITE WELL. YOU ARE SLAVES OF MISTRESS SOORNAKA NOW, AND YOU SHALL PERFORM IN THE ARENA.
NOW STILL YOUR TONGUE. YOUR MISTRESS APPROACHES.
SOORNAKA, IS IT WISE TO INVEST 20,000 MUDRAS ON UNTESTED GLADIATORS?
YOU JUST DO YOUR JOB, JANVI.
THEY ARE SUPER WARRIORS, FROM ARMAGARH. I'M QUITE CONFIDENT ABOUT BETTING ON THEM.
NOW THAT'S ONE PLEASANT SIGHT AFTER A LONG TIME.
SO WHAT ARE WE SUPPOSED TO DO IN THIS ARENA OF DESPAIR? IF SHE'S PUTTING A LOT OF MONEY ON US, IT'D BE MY PLEASURE TO SERVE HER...

SMAK
SHUT UP! SHOW SOME RESPECT TO YOUR MISTRESS!
IF FATE IS KIND TOWARD YOU, YOU'LL BE GRANTED A QUICK DEATH ENTERTAINING THE PEOPLE.
IN YOUR DREAMS, FUR BAG!
NOT TOO ROUGH WITH HIM. LEAVE THAT TO THE NECROMANTIK WAR-GHOULS IN THE ARENA.
NOT MUCH FIGHT LEFT IN YOU, I SEE. WHAT'S YOUR NAME?
RAMA.
I'VE SPENT A LOT FOR YOU TWO.
MAKE SURE I GET MY MONEY'S WORTH.
THIS IS YOUR FIRST DAY IN THE ARENA...
CHANK

...TRY TO MAKE SURE IT'S NOT YOUR LAST.
TO BE CONTINUED.

HANUMAN
Story - Ron Marz
Art & Color - David Petersen
Letters - Nilesh S. Mahadik
Thanks to Shamik Dasgupta
MANY BELIEVE THAT KISHKINDHA IS MORE MYTH THAN REALITY. THEY DOUBT THAT A CITY COULD PIERCE THE CLOUDS THEMSELVES.
BUT I CAN SAY OTHERWISE.
THE APE RACE THAT CALLS KISHKINDHA HOME ARE A NOBLE PEOPLE, BUT TIMES ARE NOT WELL IN THEIR FABLED LAND.
THE PEOPLE PRAY FOR DELIVERANCE FROM THEIR TRIBULATIONS...
...AND PLACE THEIR HOPE IN THEIR GOD HANUMAN.
IT IS SAID THAT WHEN KISHKINDHA SUFFERS MOST, GREAT HANUMAN WILL BE BORN INTO THE WORLD AS THEIR SAVIOR.

THEY BELIEVE HANUMAN IS *MIGHTY* INDEED, ABLE TO LIFT *MOUNTAINS* WITH EASE.
HIS *SPEED* IS ENVIED BY EVEN THE NORTH WINDS.
AND HIS *ROAR* CAN MAKE THE VERY EARTH TREMBLE.
MANY BELIEVE THE COMING OF HANUMAN DRAWS NIGH BECAUSE OF THE MAD RULE OF *KING BAALI*. HE WHO SITS UPON THE THRONE OF KISHKINDHA IS BUT A *SHADOW* OF HIS FORMER SELF.
MADNESS NOW ASSAILS THE ONCE-JUST MONARCH...
...AND THE PEOPLE PAY FOR HIS MALADY WITH THEIR *BLOOD*.

THE KISHKINDHANS BELIEVE ALL THIS TO BE *TRUE.* THEY BELIEVE THEIR GOD WILL BE BORN INTO THIS WORLD, AND THAT HE WILL BRING THEM *SALVATION.*
BUT IF HANUMAN TRULY *DOES* APPEAR...
...I WONDER IF THEY WILL EVEN *RECOGNIZE* HIM.
NEXT: SEETA!
Peterson

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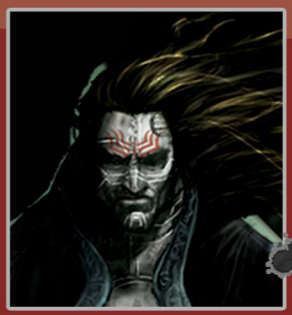
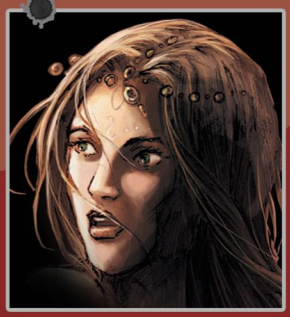
PREVIOUSLY...

Thousands of years in the future, an epic unfolds. From his stronghold on the continent of Nark, the evil **Ravan** means to crush the world under his heel. But the free-willed races of the lands of Aryavarta, led by the humans of the city of Armagarh, resist the dark lord. However, treachery resulted in the exile of **Rama**, who is the Armagarh's greatest warrior. Along with his younger brother **Lakshman**, and beautiful **Seeta**, daughter of earth, Rama travels the land in a quest to restore the earth to its former glory.

Prisoners in the dungeons of the city of Panchvati, Rama and Lakshman were forced to fight in the gladiatorial battles of Dwand-Yuddh. Meanwhile, Seeta escaped from the clutches of **Dushan** and was reunited with her friend **Vishwamitra**, who urged her to unleash her earth magic and destroy Panchvati, and thus escape the wretched city. Rama and Lakshman defeated their initial opponents in the arena, but prepared to confront their final opponent, **Viv-Sha**. The general-turned-gladiator has a score to settle with Rama, and d th e greates t battl e i n th e histor y o f Dwan d Yuddh is about to begin





OUT OF THE FRYING PAN, INTO HISSING, SPITTING FIRE.
THE STORY OF MY LIFE, AND OF MY BROTHER RAMA'S TOO.
WE HAVE DEVELOPED AN UNCANNY HABIT OF FINDING OURSELVES IN THE WORST SITUATIONS CONCEIVABLE.
WE CAME TO THIS GODFORSAKEN CITY OF PANCHVATI LOOKING FOR PROVISIONS, ENDED UP GETTING INTO TROUBLE, CAME ACROSS AN OLD FRIEND WHO AIN'T SO FRIENDLY ANYMORE, AND LOST SEETA.
MY BROTHER IS MAD AT ME FOR MESSING UP HIS LOVE LIFE, AND FOR PUTTING SEETA IN PERIL.
AND NOW HERE WE ARE, SUPPOSED TO FIGHT TO THE DEATH FOR THE ENTERTAINMENT OF THESE...PEOPLE.
SOME PEOPLE. HORDES OF BEGGARS, THIEVES, BRIGANDS AND FUGITIVES. ALL THE SCUM OF ARYAVARTA, COLLECTED IN THIS OFFAL POT.
MY ONLY QUESTION IS WHO ARE WE GOING TO FIGHT? THERE'S NO ONE ELSE IN THE ARENA.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, VANARAS AND NAGAS, BHALUS AND ASURAS AND DEGENERATE HYBRIDS OF ALL SPECIES ALIKE...

... ON BEHALF OF OUR PATRONS MASTERS ***KHARA, DUSHAN,*** AND THE BEAUTIFUL ***SOORNAKA,*** I WELCOME YOU TO THE ***ARENA OF DESPAIR!***

IN THIS CONTEST FOR SURVIVAL, AT ONE SIDE WE SEE THE LEGENDARY ***SUPER*** WARRIORS FROM ARMAGARH, PROPERTY OF LADY ***SOORNAKA.***

AND ON THE OTHER SIDE, FROM THE DREADED PITS OF ***LANKA,*** THE FOOT SOLDIERS OF THE ***UNCONQUERABLE*** ASURA ARMY...

...NEITHER DEAD NOR ALIVE, BUT MONSTERS ***ALL,*** MASTER DUSHAN ***PROUDLY*** PRESENTS YOU...

THOSE HUMANS DON'T STAND A ***CHANCE.*** WHAT A ***PITY,*** DUSHAN WILL WIN ALL THE BETS.

...THE ***NECROMANTIK WAR-GHOULS!***

THERE THEY ARE. KIND OF ***HARD*** TO MISS...

...TOO UGLY FOR THAT.
GHHAARRG!
SHAAKT
HRKK?
SPLUTT

YOU TAKE THE REST.
GEE... THANKS.
THAT SHOULD DO...

ENOUGH, LAKSH...
"...I THINK OUR SPECTATORS HAVE HAD SUFFICIENT ENTERTAINMENT."
BY THE TEN HEADS OF RAVAN. THIS I DID NOT SEE COMING.
THEY WERE INDEED A FINE CATCH.
HAIL, WARRIORS OF ARMAGARH!
HAIL, SUPER WARRIORS!
THE BLUE ONE IS SO HANDSOME!
GAH! I LOST A LOT OF MUDRAS BETTING ON THE WAR-GHOULS!
WELL DONE, RAMA.

PEOPLE OF PANCHVATI, OUR MAIN EVENT IS OVER FOR THE DAY.
TOMORROW WE WILL WATCH THE SUPER WARRIORS FACE ANOTHER CHALLENGE. TOMORROW THEY FIGHT THEIR OWN, FELLOW SUPER WARRIORS FROM ARMAGARH, CAPTURED IN THE ASURA STRONGHOLDS OF CHITRAKUT.
LIKE MY SISTER WHO OWNS THESE MEN, I TOO HAVE PAID A HEFTY SUM TO BRING HUMAN WARRIORS FOR YOUR PLEASURE.
TOMORROW THE BETTING GOES THREE STAKES HIGHER! HAPPY GAMBLING!
BY THE GODS! THEY HAVE SUPER WARRIORS HOLED UP IN THIS DUMP!
SO IT SEEMS.
IF THEY ARE GREAT IN NUMBER, WE CAN JOIN FORCES AND BRING THIS HELLHOLE DOWN BRICK BY BRICK.
I CAN'T WAIT FOR TOMORROW!
BACK TO YOUR CELLS! TOMORROW YOU MIGHT NOT BE THIS LUCKY.
YEAH, YOU JUST WAIT 'TIL TOMORROW, STINK BREATH. I'LL PUT THAT PIKE UP YOUR...
GENTLY. THEY JUST WON ME THE BOUNTY OF A LIFETIME. GIVE THEM BETTER CELLS AND DOUBLE THEIR RATIONS.
TOMORROW YOU REALLY MIGHT NOT BE THIS LUCKY.

IN THE PALACE OF DUSHAN
COME NOW, I MISSED THE SHOW OF YOUR FRIENDS DYING AGAINST MY YODDHAS IN THE ARENA, ALL FOR YOU.
YOU'D BEST *MAKE UP* FOR THAT, MY LOVELY ONE.
COME *CLOSER*...
YAAAGH!
CLOSE ENOUGH.
I'LL KILL YOU, YOU LITTLE WITCH!
I'LL SEE THAT YOU BECOME *FODDER* FOR THE BEAST PENS!
OUT OF MY *WAY*!
UFF!

THIS ACCURSED PLACE DOESN'T *END*.
FEELS LIKE I'M RUNNING IN *CIRCLES*...
THERE SHE IS!
GRAB HER, OR THE BOSS WILL SKIN US ALIVE!

WHERE'D SHE GO?
SHE MUST HAVE GONE INSIDE ONE OF THE ROOMS. CHECK EVERY ONE OF THEM.
HUSH.
IT'S ME, VISH.
WHERE WERE YOU? RAMA AND LAKSH WERE CAPTURED AND TAKEN TO FIGHT FOR THEIR LIVES. NOW I'M TRAPPED HERE.
ALL THANKS TO YOUR SILLY EMOTIONS. WHY DID YOU LEAVE OUR SHELTER, SEETA?
I...CAN'T SAY. NOTHING'S RIGHT ANYMORE, I FEEL LIKE I'M CREATING A RIFT BETWEEN THE BROTHERS.
WE'VE HAD NOTHING BUT TROUBLE SINCE WE LEFT MITHILA. I'M NOT STRONG ENOUGH TO TAKE THIS ANYMORE.
NONSENSE!
YOU ARE THE MOST POWERFUL BEING IN ARYAVARTA, SEETA. TOO LONG YOU HAVE BEEN KEPT IN IGNORANCE OF YOUR TRUE POTENTIAL.
YOU NEED PROPER GUIDANCE, AND THE ELDERS WILL PROVIDE THAT. YOU MUST COME WITH ME.
I AM NOT LEAVING WITHOUT RAMA AND LAKSH.
THEN DO IT!
DO WHAT?!
THIS CITY REEKS OF CORRUPTION AND DEMENTIA. THEY WILL NEVER LET RAMA AND LAKSHMAN LEAVE.
YOUR ONLY CHOICE IS TO DESTROY PANCHVATI AND CREATE IT AGAIN IN YOUR OWN IMAGE.
ONLY YOU HAVE THE TRUE POWER!

IN THE DUNGEONS
YOU DID *WELL*, RAMA OF ARMAGARH. I HAVE HEARD *LEGENDS* OF THE SUPER WARRIOR MARTIAL ARTS, AND YOU HAVE PROVEN THEM HERE TODAY. YOUR SKILLS ARE INDEED *PEERLESS*. NEVER IN THE HISTORY OF THE ARENA OF DESPAIR WAS SUCH AN *EFFORTLESS* VICTORY POSSIBLE.
I *LIKE* YOU, RAMA.
I MUST ADMIT THAT *SELDOM* HAVE I TAKEN SUCH A LIKING FOR *ANY* MALE. NONE HAVE SPARKED MY INTEREST, AND I HAVE HAD *MANY* SUITORS TO AMUSE MYSELF.
BUT *YOU*, MY BLUE MAN, ARE TRULY A CLASS APART. YOU ARE *DIFFERENT*.
YOU *EXCITE* ME.
I WAS STILL A *CHILD* WHEN MY BROTHERS KHARA AND DUSHAN ESCAPED FROM LANKA AFTER BEING CONDEMNED BY RAVAN. KHARA NEVER WANTED ME ALONG, AS I WOULD SLOW THEM DOWN, BUT DUSHAN DECIDED OTHERWISE.
IT WAS NOT *LOVE* WHICH MADE HIM KEEP ME, AT LEAST NOT THE SORT OF LOVE YOU HUMAN SIBLINGS HAVE FOR ONE ANOTHER. IT WAS HIS *HUNGER*.
MY BROTHERS HAVE MADE GOOD IN THIS DAMNED CITY. AS I GREW OLDER I BECAME MY *OWN* WOMAN, ALWAYS NURTURING MY *HATRED* FOR MY SIBLINGS.
BUT STILL THEY ARE THE MOST *POWERFUL* IN PANCHVATI, AND I MUST STAY WITHIN THE CONFINES OF THESE WALLS.
LIKE YOU, RAMA, I AM ALSO A *PRISONER*.
WE CAN BE *TOGETHER*, BLUE STRANGER. OUR COLLECTIVE HATRED FOR KHARA AND DUSHAN CAN *END* THEIR REIGN IN PANCHVATI.
OR WE CAN *RUN AWAY* FROM THIS PLACE TOGETHER. I HAVE A HUGE TREASURE OF WEALTH HIDDEN. WE CAN ESCAPE.
WE CAN BEGIN A *NEW* LIFE WHEREVER YOU WISH, RAMA. *SAY* SOMETHING...
...ANYTHING...

WHERE IS SEETA?
WHAT?
THE LITTLE HUMAN WENCH?
I WAS READY TO LEAVE EVERYTHING FOR YOU, AND YOU STILL ASK FOR THAT SCRAWNY, PALE WRETCH?!
I KNOW NOTHING OF HER. SHE WAS PROBABLY TAKEN BY DUSHAN, WHICH MEANS SHE'S DEAD BY NOW.
KNOW THIS, RAMA. IT'S NOT A BARGAIN, ONLY A CHOICE.
YOU COME WITH ME, OR DIE TOMORROW AT THE HANDS OF YOUR OWN KIN!
NO RATIONS FOR THIS ONE. NOT EVEN WATER!
YES, MISTRESS!
HEY, GORGEOUS, WHATEVER OFFER YOU MADE MY BROTHER, I'M OPEN TO BEING YOUR SECOND OPTION...

THE NEXT DAY
HERE WE GO AGAIN.
TAKE YOUR OWN WEAPONS. MAYBE THEY'LL HELP YOU STAY ALIVE.
GENEROUS.
SHE'S DOING THIS BECAUSE SHE LIKES YOU. WHY YOU BEING SUCH A JERK? YOU COULD JUST LEAVE ME AND ELOPE WITH THAT GIRL.
SHUT UP, LAKSH. YOU KNOW I WOULD NOT ABANDON YOU OR SEETA FOR ANYTHING.
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, VANARAS AND NAGAS AND ASURAS AND DEGENERATE HYBRIDS OF ALL SPECIES ALIKE, I WELCOME YOU TO THE ARENA OF DESPAIR.
AT ONE SIDE, YESTERDAY'S CHAMPIONS RAMA AND LAKSH, SUPER WARRIORS OF ARMAGARH.
AND ON THE OTHER SIDE, BROUGHT FROM THE ASURA FORTRESSES OF CHITRAKUT, CAPTURED WARRIORS OF ARMAGARH, HERE PRESENTED FOR YOUR PLEASURE BY MASTER KHARA.
HMM...
OUR BROTHERS AT ARMS ARE HERE. WITH OUR FORCES COMBINED, NOTHING CAN STOP US.
TOGETHER WE WILL RIP THAT FAT MONSTER KHARA LIMB FROM LIMB.
AN ENTIRE PLATOON OF SUPER WARRIORS...

...FUSED TOGETHER IN AN EXPERIMENT GONE WRONG IN THE ASURA STRONGHOLDS.
ONCE A UNIFIED FORCE OF HEROIC MEN, NOW UNITED IN THIS FORMLESS ABOMINATION KNOWN ONLY AS...
...KAA- BANDHA!
START YOUR BETTING!

WHAT...HAVE THEY *DONE* TO THEM?
IT IS THE *WORLD* WE LIVE IN, LAKSH...
...WHERE *CHAOS* RULES OVER *ORDER*.
NOW BRACE YOUR WEAPON, BROTHER.
BUT... BUT THEY ARE OUR FELLOW WARRIORS...
NO LONGER. THEY...
...IT...
HRROOAR
...BEGS FOR *DEATH*!

SKLUTCH
GHH!
KWUMP
HHRRRUUU
SKRNNK

IIIHHRRRR
KILL... PLEASE...
...PAIN...
GODS...
AHHH!
LAKSH!

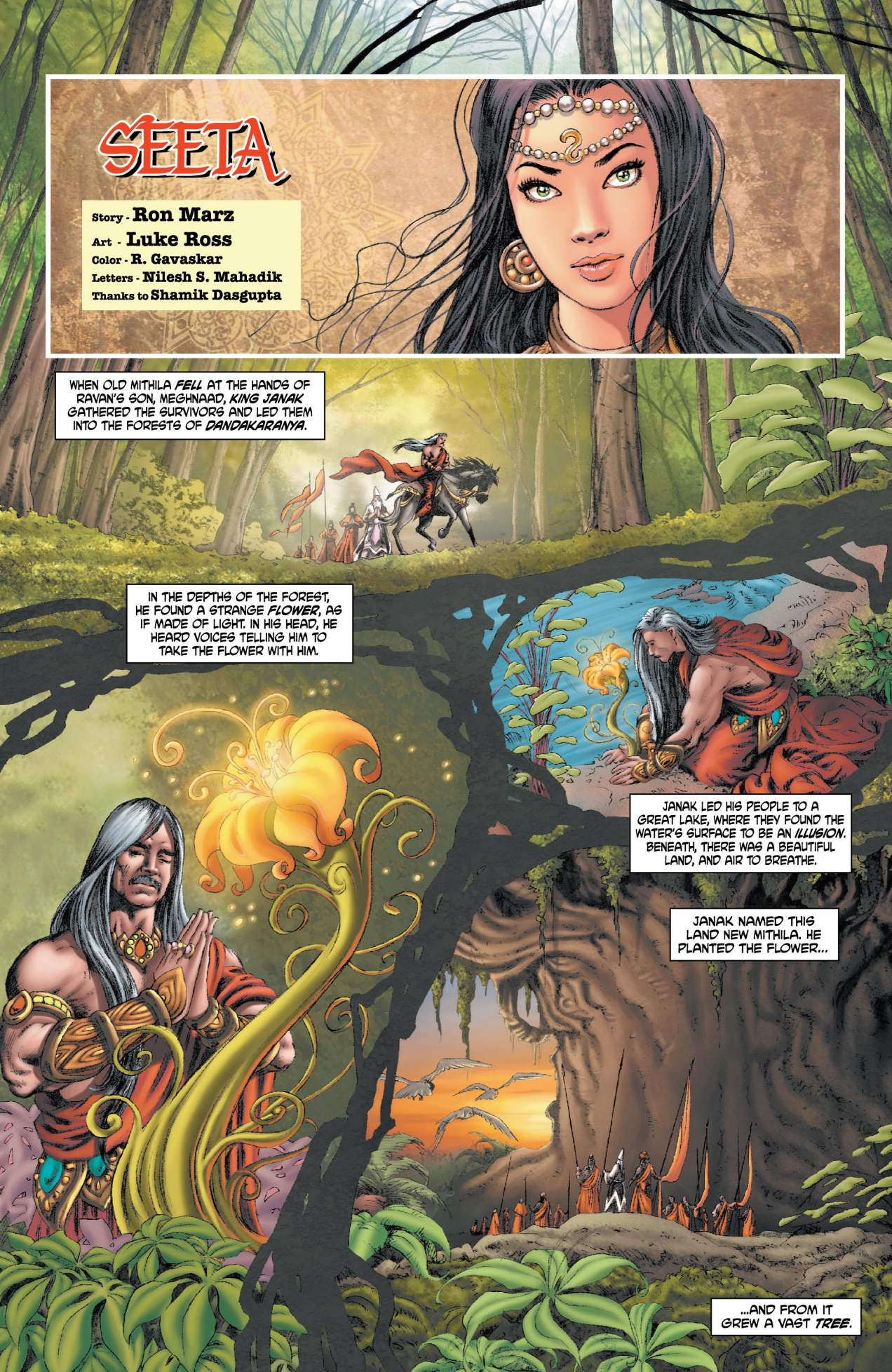
HRIIIRR
AAAAGH!
GUHH!
KROOM
HRRRR...

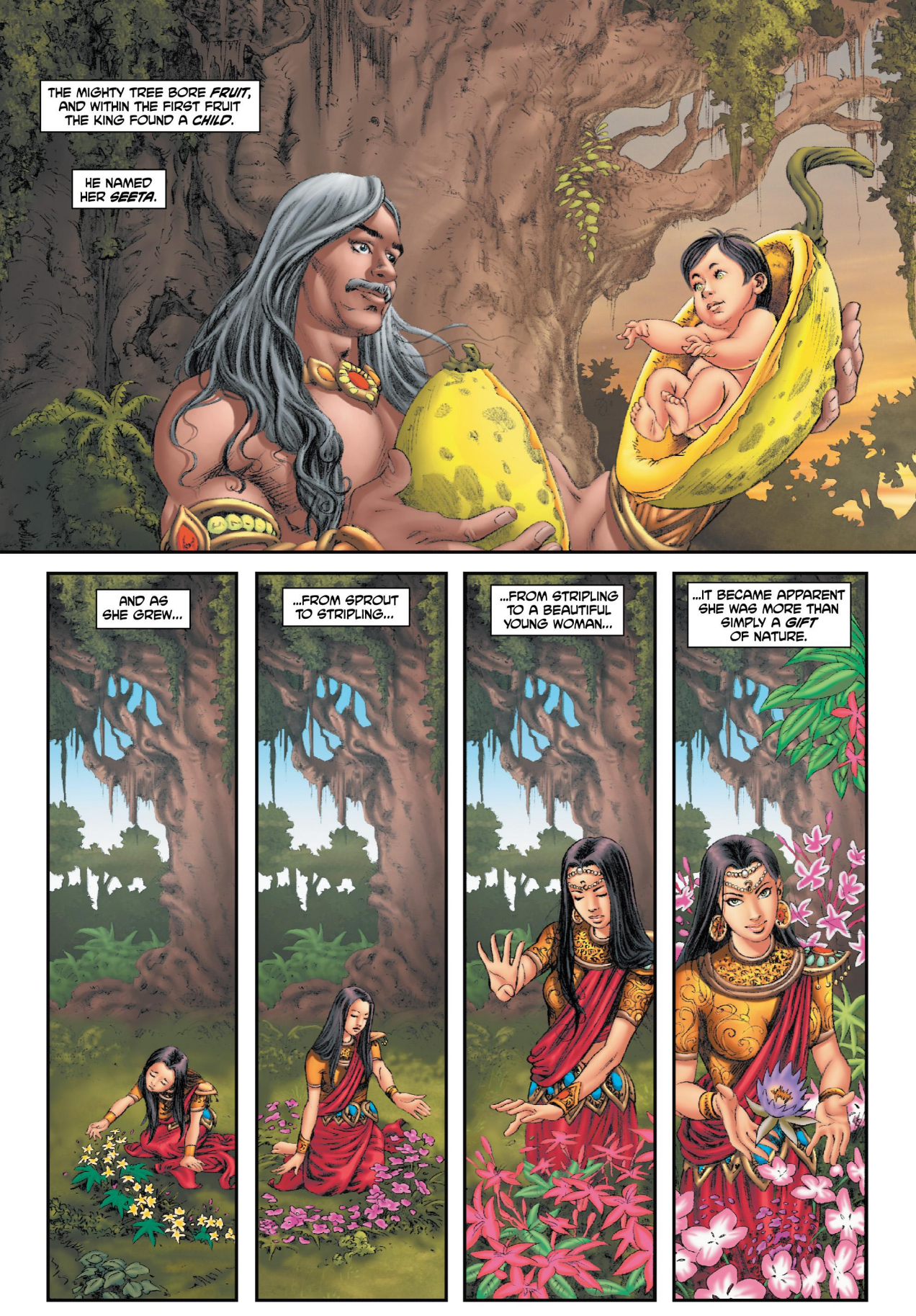
SHLUKK
THIS HAS TO END...
I MUST RELEASE YOU, BROTHERS...
...FROM YOUR CURSE AND AGONY.
AND I VOW YOU SHALL BE AVENGED!

RAMA!
RAMA!
RAMA!
RAMA!
RAMA!
DAMN YOU, HUMAN! THIS IS NOT DONE!
I LOST A FORTUNE TODAY! YOU WON'T LEAVE THE ARENA ALIVE!
RAMA!
RAMA!
RAMA!
BELOVED SPECTATORS AND GAMBLERS, THIS IS A GLORIOUS DAY IN THE HISTORY OF THE ARENA!
NEVER HAVE WE BEEN SO ENTERTAINED! I HAVE DECIDED THE SHOW MUST GO ON!
YUDDH!
YUDDH!
YUDDH!
BROTHER? ARE YOU UP FOR THIS?
MY ARM IS BROKEN, RAMA, MY SHOULDER DISLOCATED. I'M AFRAID I...
A SUPER WARRIOR IS NEVER AFRAID, LAKSH. I CAN FIGHT ALONE. JUST HANG ON...

BEFORE THE BLOOD COOLS ON THE ARENA SAND, I ANNOUNCE MY *NEXT* COMBATANT...
... THE UNDISPUTED, UNDEFEATED *CHAMPION* OF THE ARENA OF DESPAIR.
FROM THE UNDEFEATED RANKS OF THE ASURA FORCES OF LANKA, NOW A SCORNED FUGITIVE FROM HIS HOMELAND, NOW *MY* SLAVE.
ONCE A GREAT LEADER, A WARRIOR OF *UNMATCHED* SKILL AND STRENGTH, ONE OF THE *RAKSHASA* CLAN OF LANKA, KIN TO LORD RAVAN *HIMSELF*.
FOR *YOUR* PLEASURE, IN THIS VERY ARENA, HE WILL FIGHT TO THE DEATH AGAINST THE FORMIDABLE SUPER WARRIORS.
YOU...
FATE HAS DECREED WE MEET AGAIN, RAMA DESCENDANT OF THE SUN.
I *PROUDLY* PRESENT THE ASURA NOW KNOWN ONLY AS...

...THE GENERAL!
VIN-SHAN!
LET US FINISH WHAT WAS LEFT UNDONE IN JANASTHAN...
TO BE CONTINUED.


SEETA
Story - Ron Marz
Art - Luke Ross
Color - R. Gavaskar
Letters - Nilesh S. Mahadik
Thanks to Shamik Dasgupta
WHEN OLD MITHILA FELL AT THE HANDS OF RAVAN'S SON, MEGHNAAD, KING JANAK GATHERED THE SURVIVORS AND LED THEM INTO THE FORESTS OF DANDAKARANYA.
IN THE DEPTHS OF THE FOREST, HE FOUND A STRANGE FLOWER, AS IF MADE OF LIGHT. IN HIS HEAD, HE HEARD VOICES TELLING HIM TO TAKE THE FLOWER WITH HIM.
JANAK LED HIS PEOPLE TO A GREAT LAKE, WHERE THEY FOUND THE WATER'S SURFACE TO BE AN ILLUSION. BENEATH, THERE WAS A BEAUTIFUL LAND, AND AIR TO BREATHE.
JANAK NAMED THIS LAND NEW MITHILA. HE PLANTED THE FLOWER...
...AND FROM IT GREW A VAST TREE.


THE MIGHTY TREE BORE *FRUIT*, AND WITHIN THE FIRST FRUIT THE KING FOUND A *CHILD*.
HE NAMED HER *SEETA*.
AND AS SHE GREW...
...FROM SPROUT TO STRIPLING...
...FROM STRIPLING TO A BEAUTIFUL YOUNG WOMAN...
...IT BECAME APPARENT SHE WAS MORE THAN SIMPLY A *GIFT* OF NATURE.

SHE WAS, AND *IS*, THE DAUGHTER OF ***MOTHER EARTH*** HERSELF.
AND YET, FOR ALL HER GIFTS, FOR ALL HER POWER OVER THE EARTH AND GROWING THINGS...
...TO ME SHE IS, FIRST AND ALWAYS, THE LOVE OF MY BROTHER'S LIFE.
WOULD THAT SOMEDAY *I* MIGHT FIND A LOVE SO PURE.
NEXT: LAKSHMAN!